



Discover Oregon Lighthouses

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Oregon's Coastal Beacons

Select a lighthouse and discover more about these historic aids to navigation!

POINT ADAMS LIGHTHOUSE: Often forgotten, this wooden lighthouse was constructed prior to Tillamook Rock. It was no longer needed after the construction of the Tillamook Rock and the establishment of the Columbia River Lightship. (Astoria)

COLUMBIA RIVER LIGHTSHIP #604: The lightship is part of the Columbia River Maritime Museum. (Astoria)

TILLAMOOK ROCK LIGHTHOUSE: Located off-shore between Cannon Beach and Seaside. Best Viewed from Ecola State park. (Cannon Beach)

CAPE MEARES LIGHTHOUSE: Located on the first cape of the Three Capes Scenic loop, west of Tillamook. Annual bird-watch gatherings are held here annually. (Oceanside)

YAQUINA HEAD LIGHTHOUSE: This lighthouse is part of the Yaquina Head Natural Outstanding Area. (Newport)

YAQUINA BAY LIGHTHOUSE: Active for just three years, this historic wooden structure is the centerpiece of Yaquina Bay State Park. (Newport)

HECETA HEAD LIGHTHOUSE: Heceta Head State Park includes Devils Elbow State Park at the mouth of Cape Creek. A moderately steep trail leads from the parking area past the Forest Service owned Heceta Keeper's Quarters to the lighthouse. (North of Florence)

UMPQUA RIVER LIGHTHOUSE: High above the Umpqua River sits the lighthouse, surrounded by U.S. Coast Guard housing. A museum is now located in the historic structures north of the lighthouse and housing. (Winchester Bay)

CAPE ARAGO LIGHTHOUSE: Viewed from a turnout near Sunset Beach State Park, the lighthouse sits on a small island closed to the public. (Coos Bay)

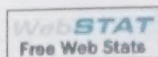
COQUILLE RIVER LIGHTHOUSE: Originally built on Rackcliff Rock, the small lighthouse now adorns the Coquille River's north jetty. Across from Old Town Bandon, the lighthouse access is through Bullards Beach State Park. (Bandon)

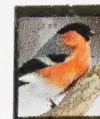
CAPE BLANCO LIGHTHOUSE: Highest above the sea, Cape Blanco sits on Oregon's most westerly cape. Cape Blanco was home to Oregon's first official woman keeper. (Port Orford)

Lighthouse Statistics - Tallest, Oldest, First Built

[Columbia River](#) | [Point Adams](#) | [Tillamook Rock](#) | [Cape Meares](#) | [Yaquina Head](#) | [Yaquina Bay](#)
[Heceta Head](#) | [Umpqua River](#) | [Cape Arago](#) | [Coquille River](#) | [Cape Blanco](#)

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Ms. A. Diane Collier
1033 SE Anchor Ave
Warrenton, OR 97146-9516



7510-01-203-4708





Ahoy, vey!

A transcript of an actual radio exchange released Oct. 10 by the Chief of Naval Operations:

Messenger No. 1:

"Please divert your course 15 degrees to the north to avoid a collision."

Messenger No. 2:

"Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to south to avoid a collision."

No. 1: *"This is the captain of a U.S. Navy ship. I say again, divert your course."*

No. 2: *"No, I say again, divert YOUR course."*

No. 1: *"THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS ENTERPRISE. WE ARE A LARGE WAR-SHIP OF THE U.S. NAVY. DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW."*

No. 2: *"This is a lighthouse. Your call."*



Chapter 10

Point Adams Lighthouse

For twenty-four years, the Point Adams Lighthouse stood proudly on an ocean beach south of the mouth of the Columbia River. Established in 1875, it was unique among Oregon lighthouses. It was the first Oregon light station with a steam fog signal and was the only one built in the Victorian Carpenters' Gothic style.

Today the station is gone, and the landscape has changed. At one time Point Adams was a rounded point at the river's entrance, a half mile from the ocean. The 1869 *Coast Pilot* described it as "low and sandy, covered with bushes and trees to the line of sand beach and low dunes. . . ." Now an enlarged Clatsop Spit separates the point from the sea by nearly one and one half miles. The spit expanded to the west and northwest after jetty construction, begun in the 1880s, altered currents around the point.

The Columbia's entrance, where the river clashes with the sea, is one of the roughest, most treacherous stretches of water in the United States, and has claimed hundreds of ships. One of the first navigation aids built to assist mariners crossing the river's bar was the Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, established on the north side of the river in 1856. With the passing years, more ships used the channel on the south side, and Lighthouse Service engineers urged the building of a light and fog signal at Point Adams.

In 1873 a site about a mile from the point was selected for the new station. It was near the southwest boundary of Fort Stevens, a river fortification established in the mid-1860s.



OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY-56254

An unknown resident occupied the Point Adams Lighthouse after it was discontinued in 1899.

Shortly after a public announcement appeared regarding the site selection, district engineer Major Henry Robert received a letter of protest signed by "The Masters of Steam Ships, Sailing Ships and Pilots." They expressed doubts about the suitability of a light and fog signal at Point Adams. They recommended the station be built on Sand Island, north and upstream of the river's entrance. Their reasons: ocean breakers would render a Point Adams fog signal inaudible to vessels approaching from the south; better bearings could be taken with a station on Sand Island when entering the river; and in low fog a captain guided by a fog signal there could shape his course by following the depth of the channel.

Major Robert replied by assuring the masters that Point Adams would have a "fog signal of the very greatest power," and a light there "will be low and will often be seen when Cape Hancock (Cape Disappointment) is obscured by fog." He added that a light on Sand Island "would help and may in time be justified."

Materials were landed at the Fort Stevens wharf on the Columbia River and hauled south over a road to the site. At the time Victorian architecture was in vogue, and the Lighthouse Service decided to use a Carpenters' Gothic design for the wooden Point Adams Lighthouse. Jig-saws had just been invented and were used to cut wood into ornate patterns for the building's interior and exterior trim.

The Lighthouse Service built five Carpenters' Gothic lighthouses during the 1870s, four in California and the one at Point Adams. Two remain: the East Brother Island Lighthouse near San Francisco and the Point Fermin Lighthouse in San Pedro. The latter is almost an exact copy of the one that stood on Point Adams.

A light was first exhibited from a fourth-order Fresnel lens in the Point Adams tower on February 15, 1875. The combination dwelling and tower stood on a sand ridge with the forest behind and ocean beaches in front.

The fog signal was as Major Robert had promised. Its twelve-inch, locomotive-type whistle, powered by steam, was one of the most powerful fog signals then available.

With a signal and light to operate, three keepers were assigned to Point Adams. H. C. Tracy was the first principal keeper. In 1878 he was replaced by Robert N. Lowe, an Astoria boat builder. Lowe moved in with his new wife, and before long their son Edward was born at the lighthouse.

Joel Munson replaced Lowe as principal keeper in late 1880. Munson was a skilled violinist and often played for dances in Astoria and for lighthouse visitors. Clara, his daughter, once wrote, "Both young and old, felt at liberty to enjoy the hospitality afforded by the out hanging latch-string, and it was no uncommon thing for 2 or 3 wagon loads of friends to drive from Fort Stevens, Hammond or Skipanon in the evening. Then the old violin would be brought out and the hours would fly by."

While keepers at other stations cultivated dark soil to grow gardens, Munson and his Point Adams predecessors fought the drifting sand. It blew into the dwelling, completely covered the picket fence, and threatened the station's water supply. Long, tall fences were built and rebuilt to try to control the sand. Grass plantings were tried with little success except one, a native grass. However, when the bright green shoots appeared above the sand, cattle ate them. Then barbed wire fences were built to keep the cattle out.

BARVIEW – The Tillamook Bay Life-Saving Station recently earned the dubious distinction of being placed on the Historic Preservation League of Oregon's list of most endangered places in Oregon.

Until 1943, the men stationed in Barview offered the only protection for sailors for 50 miles either side of Tillamook Bay.

The now-dilapidated, boarded-up station is along U.S. Highway 101 just south of the Barview Jetty Store, near the railroad tracks. Its last use was as a private vacation home in the 1980s.

It was built in 1908 for use by the United States Life-Saving Service, a forerunner of what eventually became the U.S. Coast Guard.

Today, the Barview building is the only Life-Saving Service Station remaining in Oregon.

The U.S. Life-Saving Service was created in 1878 as the first federal

*"We'd love to see a
new owner help us
put it back into use."*

—David Pinyerd

Historic Preservation Northwest

agency whose sole purpose was to protect mariners in distress along the U.S. border.

When in use, the lifesaving facility consisted of a living/dining room, a kitchen on the main floor, and bedrooms on the second floor for the four surfmen and their gear.

An adjacent boathouse held two boats, lifesaving equipment, a shed used to store fuel for heat and two bathrooms.

When the building became obsolete, it was sold to a private owner. The building changed hands until 1973, when Gary Newkirk purchased it as a beach house for his family.

Newkirk continued to maintain the house through the late 1980s, but it has been unoccupied ever since, other than housing a random sampling of squatters and vandals.

In 2005, a motorist drove off Highway 101 and crashed into the side of the house. It also had been damaged by a broken sewer line.

"We'd love to see a new owner help us put it back into use," said David Pinyerd of Historic Preservation Northwest. "There just aren't any like it left out there. ... It'd be great if we could at least make it a museum to preserve it. Other houses have even been turned into bed and breakfasts."

The house was listed on the State of Oregon Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings in 1974, although it is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



An undated photo of rescuers and their boat stationed at the Tillamook Bay Life-Saving Station.
Courtesy Photo

Tillamook Bay lifesaving station one of 10 most endangered buildings in Oregon

by Josiah Darr
Coast River Business Journal



The old lifesaving station on U.S. Highway 101 in Barview once protected mariners for 50 miles on either side of Tillamook Bay. Photo by Josiah Darr



*O*_{regon} *l*ighthouse *T*ime *L*ine

- **1857 - First Umpqua River - Destroyed by floods in 1863**
- **1866 - First Cape Arago - replaced in 1909**
- **1870 - Cape Blanco**
- **1871 - Yaquina Bay - discontinued in 1874**
- **1873 - Yaquina Head**
- **1875 - Point Adams - discontinued in 1899, nothing remains**
- **1881 - Tillamook Rock -discontinued 1957**
- **1889 - Warrior Rock - Now a minor aid**
- **1890 - Cape Meares**
- **1894 - Second Umpqua River**
- **1894 - Heceta Head**
- **1895 - Willamette River - discontinued 1935, nothing remains**
- **1896 - Coquille River**
- **1902 - Desdemona Sands - discontinued 1934, nothing remains**
- **1909 - Second Cape Arago - replaced in 1934**
- **1934 Third Cape Arago**

- **1996 - Yaquina Bay relit as a private aid to navigation**

Oregon Lighthouse Statistics

by YEAR BUILT			
Lighthouse	Order Built	First Lit	Lens Order
Umpqua River Lighthouse #1	1st	1857 Oct 10	3rd Order
Cape Arago Lighthouse #1	2nd	1866 Nov 1	4th Order
Cape Blanco Lighthouse	3rd	1870 Dec 20	1st Order
Yaquina Bay Lighthouse	4th	1871 Nov 3	5th Order
Yaquina Head Lighthouse	5th	1873 Aug 20	1st Order
Point Adams Lighthouse	6th	1875 Feb 15	4th Order
Tillamook Rock Lighthouse	7th	1881 Jan 21	1st Order
Cape Meares Lighthouse	8th	1890 Jan 1	1st Order
Columbia River Lightship	9th	1892 Apr 11	
Heceta Head Lighthouse	10th	1894 Mar 30	1st Order
Umpqua River Lighthouse #2	11th	1894 Dec 31	1st Order
Coquille River Lighthouse	12th	1896 Feb 29	4th Order
Cape Arago Lighthouse #2	13th	1909 Jul 1	4th Order
Cape Arago Lighthouse #3	14th	1934	4th Order

by LATITUDE				
Station	Latitude North	Longitude West	Tower Height	Focal Plane
Point Adams	46 11.3	123 58 3	49'	99'
Columbia #604	46 11.1	124 11.0		67'
Tillamook	45 56.3	124 01.1	62'	133'
Cape Meares	45 29.2	123 58.6	38'	217'
Yaquina Head	44 40.6	124 04.7	93'	162'
Heceta Head	44 08.3	124 07.6	56'	205'
Yaquina Bay	44 00.0	124.00.0	40'	161'
Umpqua River #2	43 39.8	124 11.9	65'	165'
Cape Arago #3	43 20.5	124 22.5	44'	100'
Coquille River	43 07.0	124 25.0	40'	47'
Cape Blanco	42 50.2	124 33.8	59'	245'

by LONGITUDE				
Station	Latitude North	Longitude West	Tower Height	Focal Plane
Cape Blanco	42 50.2	124 33.8	59'	245'
Coquille River	43 07.0	124 25.0	40'	47'
Cape Arago #3	43 20.5	124 22.5	44'	100'
Umpqua River #2	43 39.8	124 11.9	65'	165'
Columbia #604	46 11.1	124 11.0		67'
Heceta Head	44 08.3	124 07.6	56'	205'
Yaquina Head	44 40.6	124 04.7	93'	162'
Tillamook	45 56.3	124 01.1	62'	133'
Yaquina Bay	44 00.0	124.00.0	40'	161'
Cape Meares	45 29.2	123 58.6	38'	217'
Point Adams	46 11 3	123 58 3	49'	99'

by TOWER HEIGHT				
Station	Latitude North	Longitude West	Tower Height	Focal Plane
Yaquina Head	44 40.6	124 04.7	93'	162'
Umpqua River #2	43 39.8	124 11.9	65'	165'
Tillamook	45 56.3	124 01.1	62'	133'
Cape Blanco	42 50.2	124 33.8	59'	245'
Heceta Head	44 08.3	124 07.6	56'	205'
Point Adams	46 11 3	123 58 3	49'	99'
Cape Arago #3	43 20.5	124 22.5	44'	100'
Coquille River	43 07.0	124 25.0	40'	47'
Yaquina Bay	44 00.0	124.00.0	40'	161'
Cape Meares	45 29.2	123 58.6	38'	217'
Columbia #604	46 11.1	124 11.0		67'

by FOCAL PLANE				
Station	Latitude North	Longitude West	Tower Height	Focal Plane
Cape Blanco	42 50.2	124 33.8	59'	245'
Cape Meares	45 29.2	123 58.6	38'	217'
Heceta Head	44 08.3	124 07.6	56'	205'
Umpqua River #2	43 39.8	124 11.9	65'	165'
Yaquina Head	44 40.6	124 04.7	93'	162'
Yaquina Bay	44 00.0	124.00.0	40'	161'
Tillamook	45 56.3	124 01.1	62'	133'
Cape Arago #3	43 20.5	124 22.5	44'	100'
Point Adams	46 11 3	123 58 3	49'	99'
Columbia #604	46 11.1	124 11.0		67'
Coquille River	43 07.0	124 25.0	40'	47'

NOTE: Statistics are taken from 1947, 1877 and 1858 Light Lists.

More modern Light Lists likely give more accurate Latitudes &

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Mouth Columbia River,

PERSIMMON POINT LIGHT

Desdemona Sands Lighthouse

Oregon's Forgotten Sentinel



Almost forgotten, the Desdemona Sands Lighthouse stood on pilings in 12 feet of water at the western end of a shoal inside the mouth of the Columbia River.

The lighthouse was a white, octagonal frame dwelling with gray-green trim rising from a rectangular platform on piling. From a bronze-colored, pyramidal roof, rose a gray-green cylindrical lantern housing a 4th order fixed Fresnel lens which displayed a white light. On the west side was a small one story projection for the fog signal which blasted for two seconds with alternate silent intervals of three and 23 seconds. On the east side of the building was a one story annex.

The light stood 46 feet above the water and could be seen for 12 miles. It was constructed in 1902 and first shone on Christmas Eve of that year. The lighthouse itself was demolished in 1942 though a light remained at this site until 1964.

More information on Lighthouses can be found at the following site:

- [Keepers of the Light](#)
- [Lights of the Rocky Shores](#)
- [Linda's Lighthouse Page](#)
- [U.S Lighthouse Society](#)

Information for this page taken from the book, "Oregon Seacoast Lighthouses" by James A. Gibbs published by Webb Research Group ©1992, 1994. I highly recommend this and other books by Jim Gibbs and the Webb Research Group. Their coverage of West Coast lighthouses is outstanding.

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[Pacific NW/
Columbia River](#)
[Desdemona Sands](#)[Columbia River](#)

Desdemona Sands Light

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Desdemona Sands is a series of shoals on the Columbia River just north of the main channel. The area gets its name from the bark *Desdemona*. The sands had traditionally been called Chinook Sands. On New Year's Day 1857, the ship's captain tried to cross the Columbia River bar without a pilot - having been promised a new suit if he could enter the Columbia by January 1. The ship ran aground on the bar. The cargo was saved, but the ship was lost, and one salvager was drowned.

The Desdemona Sands Lighthouse was first lit in December 1901 to replace the Point Adams light. The Carl Leick-designed structure was identical to Semiahmoo Bay in Washington - a residence with rooftop tower built on pilings. The station housed a fog signal and fourth-order Fresnel lens 48 feet above sea level. The station had a water cistern for gathering fresh water, and a small boat to reach the mainland. The station was for keepers only - families lived on shore.

In 1934, the station received electricity from the shore, making the keeper's position redundant. The station was dismantled and replaced by a minor aid placed on a small pyramidal structure. This was replaced again in 1955. The light was finally extinguished in 1965.

References (see links)

Umbrella Guide to Oregon Lighthouses, Nelson pp. 83-85
Oregon's Seacoast Lighthouses, Gibbs pp. 217-221
Lighthouses Northwest - the Designs of Carl Leick, Aliberti p. 14

Directions: Nothing remains except some pilings and rocks that may be visible when the river is low. (September 2006)

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Desdemona Sands Lighthouse ...

The Desdemona Sands are shoal sands east off Point Adams. They were named after the bark Desdemona which, while inbound to Astoria, grounded there in December 1856. The Desdemona Sands Lighthouse was built in 1902.

"... On a case-by-case basis Congress appropriated funds for design and construction of important facilities. These included lighthouses:

<i>Cape Arago</i>	<i>(1866)</i>	
<i>Cape Blanco</i>	<i>(1870)</i>	
<i>Yaquina Bay</i>	<i>(1872)</i>	
<i>Cape Foulweather</i>	<i>(1873)</i>	
<i>Point Adams</i>	<i>(1875)</i>	
<i>Tillamook Rock</i>	<i>(1881)</i>	
<i>Warrior Rock</i>	<i>(1888)</i>	<i>mouth of the Willamette River</i>
<i>Cape Meares</i>	<i>(1890)</i>	
<i>Umpqua River</i>	<i>(1894)</i>	
<i>Heceta Head</i>	<i>(1894)</i>	
<i>Coquille River</i>	<i>(1894)</i>	
<i>Desdemona Sands</i>	<i>(1905)</i>	<i>[correct date: 1902, see below]</i>

The goal was to create a system of stations with interlocking lights. On a clear night at sea, a mariner might expect to sight at any point a distinctive beacon on shore to pinpoint the location. Fog signals powered by steam engines blasted warnings from a number of the stations to tell captains to drop anchor or beat a retreat until the mists cleared. ..." [Oregon State "Blue Book" Website, 2006]

The U.S. Coast Guard Website (2006) states:

"... One of the last wooden straight-pile lighthouses built was the Desdemona Sands Lighthouse, Columbia River, Oregon. It was completed in 1902 and dismantled shortly after World War II. ..."

The Desdemona Sands Lighthouse is described in the 1903 U.S. Coast Survey as being a fixed white, 4th order light, located 46 1/2 feet above mean high water and visible for 12 miles. The structure is a *"White, octagonal, one-and-one-half-story dwelling, with gray*

trimmings, rising from a rectangular platform, on piles, and having a bronze-colored pyramidal roof, surmounted by a gray cylindrical lantern with bronze-colored roof. A small one-story projection, for the fog signal, is on the westerly side, and a one-story annex on the easterly side of the dwelling." The fog signal was a 3rd-class Daboll trumpet which blasts 3 seconds with silent intervals of 3 and 23 seconds. The 1909 U.S. "Coast Survey" lists the colors as gray-green.

The 1942 U.S. Coast Pilot give the following description of the Desdemona Sands Light:

"... Desdemona Sands Light is shown from a white pyramidal tower on white piles on the western end of the shoal. The light is 36 feet above water, and visible 11 miles. A fog signal is sounded on an air diaphragm horn. ..."

The Desdemona Sands Lighthouse was de-activated in 1934 and dismantled in 1945. The Desdemona Sands Lighthouse had a fourth-order bulls-eye Fresnel lens which now resides in the museum at the Mukilteo Light Station in Puget Sound.

Since October 1997 CORIE (a pilot environmental observation and forecasting system run by the OGI School of Science and Engineering of the Oregon Health & Science University) maintains a fixed light called "*Desdemona Sands Light*" off the Point Adams coast.

DESDEMONA SANDS LIGHTHOUSE:

Now no longer standing, the Desdemona Sands Lighthouse entered service on Christmas Eve 1902. Keepers maintained the operation of the lighthouse until October 23, 1934.

Two days later, however, the keeper was ordered to return to station...new <fog> signal out of commission. Lighthouse was officially closed on November 6, 1934.

In 1965, the fog signal was replaced by a series of lighted buoys. Only a few broken pilings and riprap stones now mark the place where the lighthouse stood.

Desdemona Sands Lighthouse

On the first day of the new year 1857, an American bark, the ship *Desdemona* lay stranded on the sandy shoals just inside the mouth of the Columbia River--near what today is Hammond, OR. The ship's captain was attempting to avoid a late delivery penalty for his cargo, so he rushed his ship into the river unassisted and ultimately grounding her. Although some of the cargo was saved, ship *Desdemona* could not be recovered and gave her name to the shoals where she lay. These shoals, in the middle of the Columbia River--north of the main channel, stretch almost four miles from just east of Hammond to about one quarter mile east of the Astoria-Megler bridge.

Just before Christmas in 1902, the *Desdemona Sands Lighthouse* was completed on the west end of the sands where the ship *Desdemona* had gone aground.

The lamp for the *Desdemona Sands lighthouse* was lit for the first time on Christmas eve that year. Built on a platform above a maze of piles, the lighthouse consisted of a wood-frame two and one-half story building. Unlike most other lighthouse stations, *Desdemona Sands lighthouse* never became a home for the principal keeper, his assistant and their families. When Arval Settles worked there, his wife Helga and their four children lived in Hammond, OR. Sometimes he was gone for weeks at a time. During those periods, Helga would take the children in a small rowboat with an outboard engine out to the lighthouse to see their father.

When a submerged power cable was laid to a small tower near the station, it was no longer necessary to have keepers live at the station. It took longer than anticipated to abandon *Desdemona Sands lighthouse* though because weather and the power cable wouldn't cooperate. Scheduled to close on October 23, 1934 it wasn't until November 6, 1934 that they were finally able to move everything out that could be moved. The keeper's log recorded the final entry, "*This is finish of this station for sure.*"

In the early years of the 1900s, horses were used to help fishermen pull their nets when seining salmon off *Desdemona Sands*. Once the fishermen set their nets in the Columbia and they had become filled with fish, the fishermen used the horses to pull the nets into shallow water for the fish to be harvested.

During this time, a stable for the horses was built on the eastern end of *Desdemona Sands* just off Astoria. When the tide was low, the horses would be brought out of the stables to work. Then when the tide came in, they were returned to the stables where they were safe high above the water. The horses lived in these stables throughout fishing season and were then returned to their pastures ashore.

Although the *Desdemona Sands Lighthouse* was de-activated in 1934, it wasn't until 1945 that it was dismantled leaving only the fog signal and the beacon there. In 1965, the fog signal and beacon were replaced by a series of lighted buoys. Today only a few broken piles and riprap stones now mark where this lighthouse stood and where the *Desdemona* once lay.

POINT ADAMS LIGHTHOUSE:

Established in 1875, the Point Adams Lighthouse stood proudly on an ocean beach south of the mouth of the Columbia River. It was the first Oregon light station with a steam fog signal.

Today the station is gone, and the landscape has changed. At one time, Point Adams was a rounded point at the river's entrance, a half mile from the beach. Now an enlarged Clatsop Spit separates the point from the sea by nearly one and one half miles. The spit expanded to the west and northwest after jetty construction, begun in the 1880s, altered currents around the point.

Point Adams was officially discontinued on January 31, 1899. Thirteen years later the Lighthouse Service burned down the abandoned station.

Today the Point Adams Lighthouse is gone. Fort Stevens' Battery Russell built in 1904, stands near the site where the lighthouse once stood.





POINT ADAMS LIGHT HOUSE

75 years ago – 1938

What the secretary of the Clatsop County Anglers Association describes as the largest steelhead ever taken by hook and line in these waters was landed by D. Sigfridson, an Olney farmer, on the Klaskanine. The great catch weighed 20 pounds 12 ounces, Walter Johnson, secretary of the Anglers association, reported today.

A battered boat salvaged from a ship-wreck was the beginning of the life-saving station at the mouth of the Columbia River, according to research made by the WPA historical records survey. Capt. J.W. Munson, stationed at Fort Canby in 1865, saw the bark Industry wrecked within sight of the lighthouse but as he had no means of rescuing those aboard 17 lives were lost. Among the wreckage of the ill-fated ship which washed ashore was a metallic boat in good condition and containing air tanks.

Capt. Munson conceived the idea that the boat could be put in order and used for life-saving. Benefit entertainments were given in Astoria, and the necessary funds were raised to outfit the boat with oars, rope and other equipment necessary for rescue work. The lighthouse department build a shelter for the boat, and issued orders that if volunteers could be found to man it in an emergency, it was to be used for life-saving.

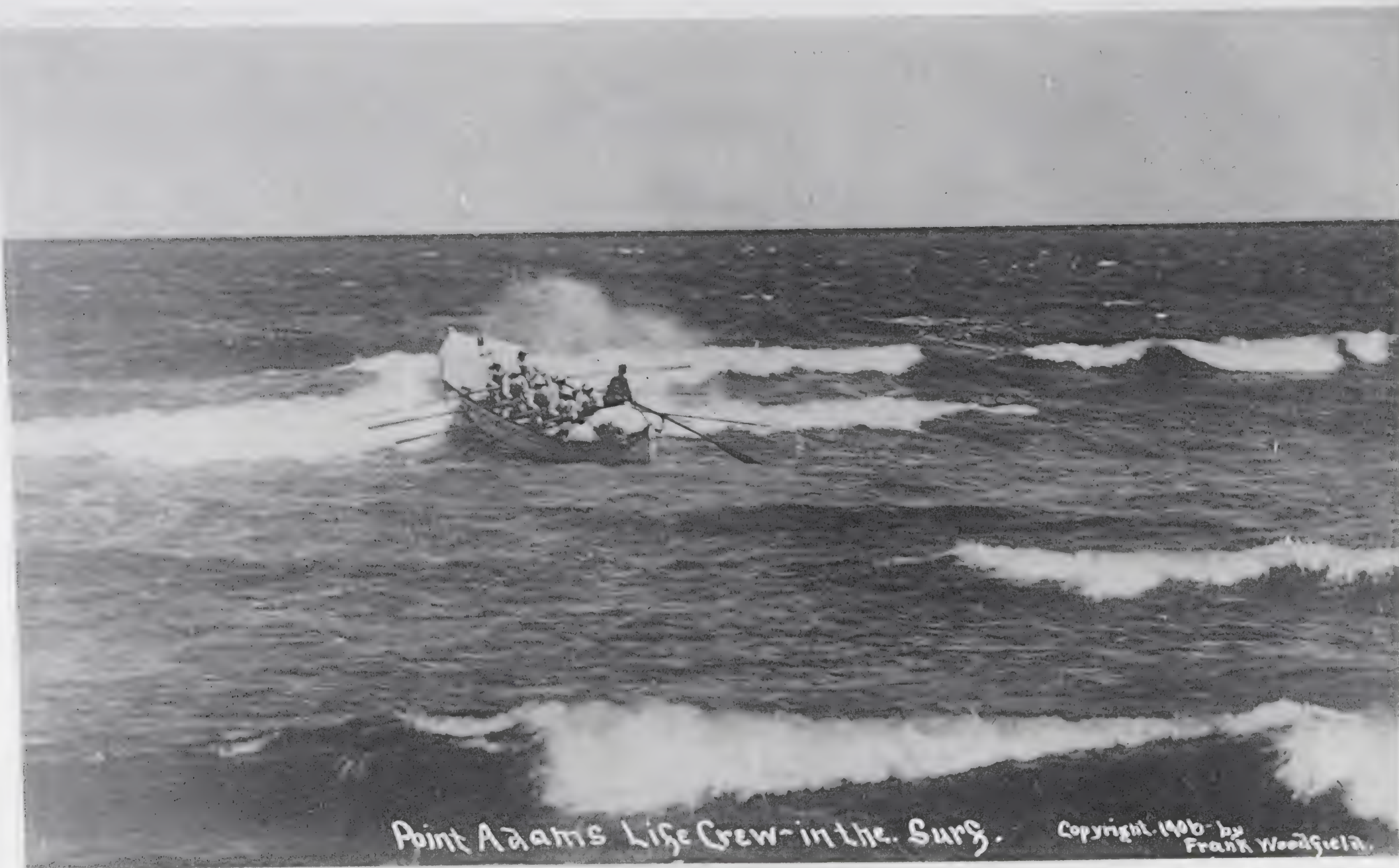
The first rescue was made when the W.B. Soranton was wrecked at the mouth of the Columbia, with Capt. Munson as part of the crew, 13 lives were saved. Shortly afterwards the ship Architect was wrecked and the emergency lifesaving crew rescued 10 persons.

When the government established the life-saving station at Fort Canby, this volunteer boat was turned over to be used as part of the equipment of the new station. From this beginning grew the Coast Guard service of today.

1.22.2014



Fort Stevens Lighthouse



Point Adams Life Crew-in the. Surf.

Copyright 1906 by
Frank Woodfield.



Point Adams
Light House
EST. 1875
disc. 1899
burned 1912

Lightship Columbia

Astoria, OR - 1950

www.us-lighthouses.com

Tower Information:

Tower Height: 66' **Focal Plane:** 67'

Active Aid to Navigation: Unknown

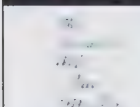
Latitude: 46.190 N **Longitude:** -123.824 W

See this lighthouse on [Google Maps](#).

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amazon.com



The Senator's Wife
Sue Miller
New \$16.47
Best \$11.98

The Commoner
John Burnham Schwabach

Revelation
Karen Traviss

The Final Warning
James Patterson

People of the Book
Geraldine Brooks

Lighthouses

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The Columbia Lightship marked the entrance to the Columbia River at the Pacific Ocean. Several vessels would be known as "Columbia". LV #50 was the first Columbia Lighthouse and was stationed at the mouth of the river in 1892. This became the first lightship actively deployed on the West Coast. It served until 1909, when it was replaced by LV #88. LV #88 served the Columbia for 30 years until 1939 when it was replaced by a similar ship called LV #93. LV #93 served until 1951 when WLV604 took over.

WLV 604 would be the last vessel known as the Columbia. The ship was made of steel, and was 128 feet long, 30 feet wide, and draft of 11 feet. The ship was powered by a diesel engine made by Atlas Imperial. The lighting system on the WLV 604 was a 375mm lens visible for up to 13 miles. Fog warning was provided by two diaphone signals on either side of the ship. The lightship was decommissioned in 1979 and replaced by a lighted navigational buoy (LNB). The LNB was eventually retitled as well.

The Columbia Lighthouse was the first lightship to serve on the west coast, and the last one to be decommissioned on the west coast. WLV 604 is open to the public at the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria, Oregon.

Directions: The lightship is located along Highway 30 in Astoria. At the point where Highway 101 heads north over the Columbia River, you want to follow Highway 30, which turns into Marine Drive.

[View more pictures of this lighthouse](#)

To rate this lighthouse, click on a number below:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Lighthouse Rating: 5.43

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Lighthouses of The Pacific Northwest

Select a lighthouse:

Desdemona Sands *
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Willamette River *
WLV 604 - Lightship Columbia

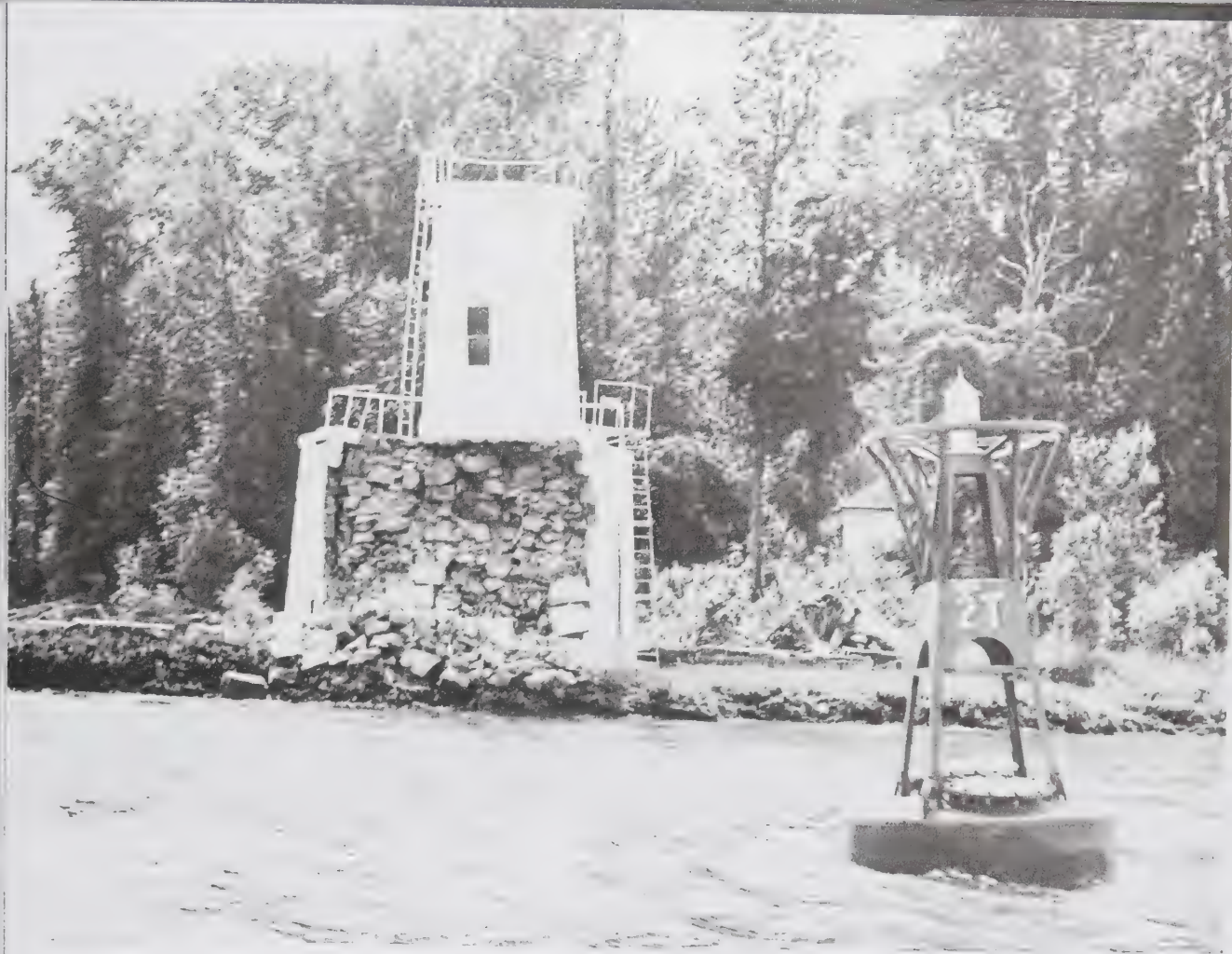
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Lighthouse at the junction of Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

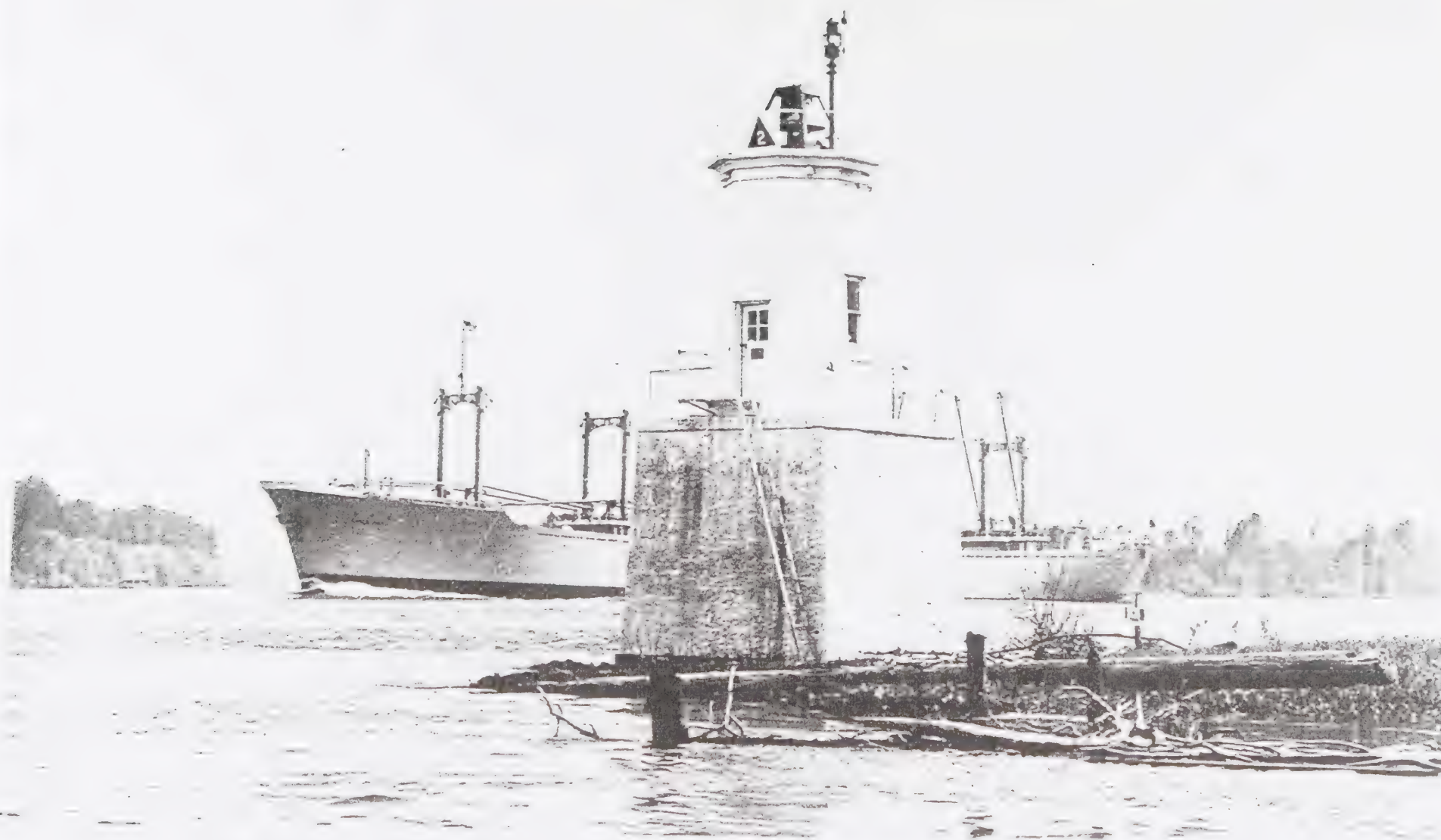




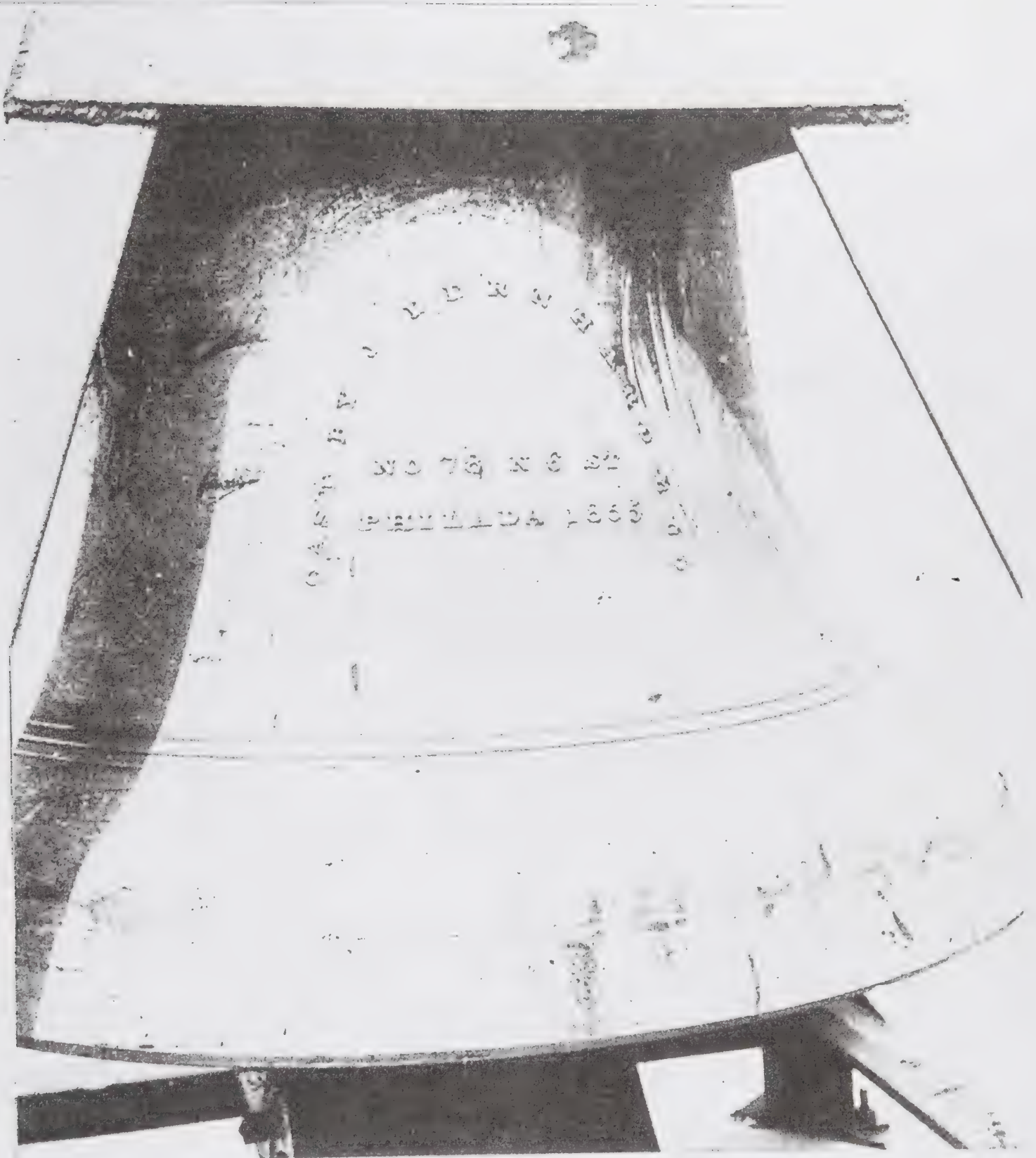
Then on May 27, 1969, a runaway barge, under tow, slammed into the stone lighthouse foundation at **WARRIOR ROCK** and the result is seen in the photo. The Coast Guard had to make a decision whether to rebuild the historic lighthouse or to replace it with a new structure. A temporary buoy is seen positioned in front of the facility. The fogbell mounted at the station was the oldest on the West Coast, used as early as 1856 at **CAPE DISAPPOINTMENT** and later at **WEST POINT**. When being removed after the mishap, it was dropped and badly cracked but is now the property of the Columbia County Historical Society. The light structure was rebuilt. Photo Courtesy Lawrence Barber, Portland, Oregon.

The tug *Daniel Kern*, pictured here as a unit of the Bellingham Tug & Barge Company, was the original lighthouse tender *Manzanita*, which made early West Coast history in the aids to navigation field. While still a lighthouse tender in 1905, she ran afoul of the outcrops of Warrior Rock and became a total constructive loss to the government. After months, Kern & Kern got rights to salvage her and in a remarkable piece of marine recovery work refloated the vessel giving her a new name, *Daniel Kern*. Ironically, it was this same vessel that brought the supplies and materials for the establishment of **WARRIOR ROCK LIGHTHOUSE** in 1888-89.





A landmark since 1888, **WARRIOR ROCK LIGHTHOUSE** is seen here as the Japanese freighter *Chile Maru* passes bound down the Columbia River. The lighthouse is located on Warrior Point, Sauvie Island, 0.8 miles above the Port of St. Helens. *Lawrence Barber photo, 1958.*



Perhaps the oldest fogbell on the Pacific Coast is seen above, a bell which served at **WARRIOR ROCK** on the Columbia River for many years but whose early history is somewhat a mystery. Cast by J. Bernhard and Co., No. 78 N. 6th St. Philadelphia, Pa. in 1855, the bell was in use, according to old records, at **CAPE DISAPPOINTMENT STATION** when that station opened in 1856. In 1881 the bell was shifted to **WEST POINT LIGHTHOUSE** on Puget Sound and was at **WARRIOR ROCK** from 1889 till its demise in 1969. *Larry Barber photo.*

It was almost one hundred years later that a little lighthouse was built at the spot to help guide river traffic into the Portland area.

1. *Lighthouses of the Pacific*, Jim Gibbs, 1986.
2. "The Way of the Warrior," Bill Monroe, *The Oregonian*.

Warrior Rock Need to ReType

Cardiac arrest fatal to lighthouse keeper



OSWALD ALLIK

Service will be at 10 a.m. Saturday in Augustana Lutheran Church, 2710 NE 14th Ave., for Oswald Allik, who was considered the "dean of lighthouse keepers."

Mr. Allik died April 23 of cardiac arrest after exerting himself trying to save the lives of two motorists who veered off the Salmon River highway near his coastal vacation home.

Mr. Allik spent 20 years as keeper of the famous old Tillamook Rock lighthouse 1.2 miles at sea off Tillamook

Head near Seaside. He was the last man to leave the rock after turning out the light at 12:01 a.m. Sept. 1, 1957, ending its 78-year career.

Mr. Allik was proud that during his two decades on the rock, the light never went out until he was ordered to pull the main switch.

A lighted buoy at sea a half-mile west of the rock now replaces the historic lighthouse, which was sold to a New York businessman.

Mr. Allik spent 32 years in the lighthouse service under the U.S. Coast Guard, including a tour of duty on the Columbia River and six years as keeper at Heceta Head. He retired in 1963 after the Heceta Head light was automated.

He lived at 3408 NE Liberty St.

He was awarded the Albert Gallatin Award for his long and faithful service. A book on West Coast Lighthouses, written by James A. Gibbs Jr. of Hawaii, was dedicated to Allik, "Dean of Lighthouse Keepers."

Funeral was delayed to permit Gibbs, who served on the rock with Mr. Allik, to attend.

Mr. Allik was born in Tallinn, Estonia, coming to Oregon in 1926.

Cape Disappointment Lighthouse

Cape Disappointment lighthouse was first lit on October 15, 1856, and it is still sending its beam of light across the Pacific Northwest waters guiding ships into the Columbia River and on upriver to their ports.

The prominent tree-covered headland of Cape Disappointment rises nearly 300 feet above the water. It was named in 1788 by Captain John Meares, an English ship captain and fur trader. Looking for the river that--according to earlier Spanish explorers--existed here, Meares became frustrated and sailed away when he couldn't locate the river's entrance leaving behind only the name "*Cape Disappointment*".

Prior to the construction of Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, white flags had been flown from a tree, trees had been set afire to help guide ships into the river's mouth, and then, three trees on the cape were topped to provide mariners with a bearing site to safely enter the river's deepest channel.

During the early years, one of the principal Cape Disappointment Lighthouse keepers was well-known Captain Joel Munson. Since 1858, he had lived near Astoria and became the lighthouse keeper at the Cape Disappointment station in 1865. During his first months stationed there, he started a lifesaving station--begun with an old metallic boat with air tanks from the wreckage of the ship *Industry* which sank while attempting a Columbia River bar crossing. To repair the lifesaving boat and pay for its upkeep, Munson, a talented fiddle player, played for dances in Astoria and the surrounding countryside to raise money--\$2.50 per person.

During 1866, Munson and a volunteer crew saved the 13 passengers and crew of the sinking *W B Scranton*. Because of Munson's demonstration of a successful rescue service at the cape, in 1878 a U S Live-Saving Service Station was established at Cape Disappointment.

Munson left the Lighthouse Service shortly after this and returned to shipbuilding in Astoria, OR. In 1881, Captain Munson became the principal lighthouse keeper at Point Adams Lighthouse on the southern shore of the Columbia River near today's Hammond, OR. He worked here until 1898 when he retired to his home in Skipanon--today's Warrenton, OR.

Captain Munson's home still stands today and is located two houses north of 9th street on the west side of Main Street.

Please respect the privacy of the residents of the home. Just look as you drive by. Thank you!

This information was taken from the book Oregon Lighthouses

'Never sins'

Lighthouse owner 'straight arrow'

By JANN MITCHELL
Journal Staff Writer

What kind of person pays \$27,000 for a lighthouse?

A wealthy one, obviously.

And, in the case of the newly purchased Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, a rather unusual one.

He's Portlander Max Shillock Jr., who doesn't work, won't reveal his age and claims he never sins.

The young man stands out in a crowd.

His dark hair is cut almost painfully short; his finely chiseled features are as pale as his 100-year-old lighthouse.

The space between his eyebrows is permanently furrowed from searching for precisely the correct word. And in his loose-fitting, '40s-style black and white pin-striped suit, the tall, lean figure is reminiscent of the late Howard Hughes as a young man.

Shillock's cash purchase — like Hughes' — hasn't exactly caused him to begin pinching pennies, either.

"Far from it," says the shy man who says he inherited a trust fund from grandparents. He enhances the sum with investments, stocks and bonds "and not going out Saturday nights."

"I am a Calvinist — I sacrifice present pleasure for future benefit," Shillock said, adding that he does not smoke, drink or "sin."



MAX SHILLOCK JR.

. . . 'I sacrifice present pleasure . . .'

"I'm very straight arrow, I never sin, I think clear thoughts — I've never done anything that would not permit me into heaven," said the somber Shillock.

So what does Portland's probably most eligible bachelor do for kicks?

"I just read through the Wall Street Journal and think to myself, 'Why isn't that me?' I am a very disciplined person, who takes life very seriously," he explained earnestly.

Ask him about hobbies, jobs, goals in life and Shillock repeats the words as if he's never heard them before, then asks for suggestions.

Suggest that some people play golf in their leisure time, for instance, and he thinks of Waverley Country Club, where he occasionally plays with his uncle, Paul Bechtold, founder of the National Hospital Association.

"I'm most comfortable in a country club atmosphere," he explains. It seems an incongruous statement for a man who "abhors small talk," but he quickly adds that financial wheeling and dealing is the big draw there.

Shillock acknowledges he has few friends, but he does claim the state's largest collection of Coke memorabilia, and there's the \$1,000 canceled check he save from contributing to Nixon's last presidential campaign.

Then there's his long-time interest in things maritime, which prompted purchase of the lighthouse a mile offshore from Ecola State Park. He's collecting historical data about the old sentinel of the sea, with thoughts of publishing a book about it in 1980 for its 100th birthday.

Shillock will visit the lighthouse for the first time in May, and if the stories prove true about ghosts inhabiting the one-acre rock, "I wouldn't evict them — they were there first." But he remains skeptical.

Suggest he hold a seance there and Shillock mulls the idea over like an uncertain kitten confronting his first ball of yarn.

It might be interesting he concedes, but then practicality snuffs out an instant of playfulness and he rejects the idea for "only real things" on his island.

What's real for most people simply isn't to Shillock. Ask about jobs and he gets that puzzled look again, repeating the word as one would struggle to pronounce a foreign language.

He has worked "off and on," Shillock admits, "but I like to be my own boss."

He was once offered a job in a mortuary, he says, "and I was told I'd be a natural. My hands are real cold."

At least he doesn't have foot-long fingernails like Howard Hughes reputedly did, you joke. The corners of Shillock's mouth turn up ever so slightly at the comparison.

"Hughes wasn't a very happy man, was he?" Shillock asks. "But sometimes I'm tempted to lock myself in a dark room (like Hughes did) and run old Liberace TV shows. I have 15 of them

(Continued on page 2) ★

★ *Lighthouse owner to 'keep above the masses'*

(Continued from page 1)

and they are one of my most prized possessions."

The only concrete future plans Shillock seems to have involve making

more money, although he says he would "love to enter publishing, and it would be interesting to own a basketball team some day. But they couldn't be third-rate players; they would have to be nothing but the best."

Shillock's enjoyment of money began, he insists, when his godfather gave him silver dollars upon his Episcopalian baptismal at age five.

"... Just the feel of them, and what they represented," he recalled fondly.

His preference for keeping money rather than spending it is perhaps best exemplified in his call for "donations" of carpentry, electrical and painting help for the lighthouse.

"Why pay when people can donate?" Shillock asks. "Don't you know how shrewd I am?"

Those who jump at this rare opportunity to help a rich man out, however, will be rewarded with a mention in his lighthouse book and perhaps even a weekend at the landmark.

The more people, the more fun, reasons Shillock, his mixed emotions evident as he peeks out from behind a lifetime of aloofness at the publicity his purchase has prompted.

Excitement tinges his voice as he talks about the television interviews and his recent front-page picture on *The Journal*.

Yet Shillock insists he was "born an old man," and reiterates his intention to "keep above the masses."

What better place to do it than a lighthouse?



Rock Rock and Light House,
Oregon Coast.
1910.



Oregon -- Tillamook Rock and Light House.





FILE 261. Tillamook Light - Oregon Coast

A ROCK FOR THE AGES — & BIRDS TOO

By MICHELE LaBOUNTY
Of The Daily Astorian

4/22/94

ECOLA STATE PARK — A half mile offshore on a solitary rock, life and death mingle

against a backdrop of salt spray from waves crashing 100 feet below.



EARTH DAY '94

Gore defends Clinton environmental policy....4

Tilly, as the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse is called, perches solidly on the rock as it has for 114 years. The National Historic Monument no longer flashes warnings to mariners. Instead, it cradles the ashes of the dead.

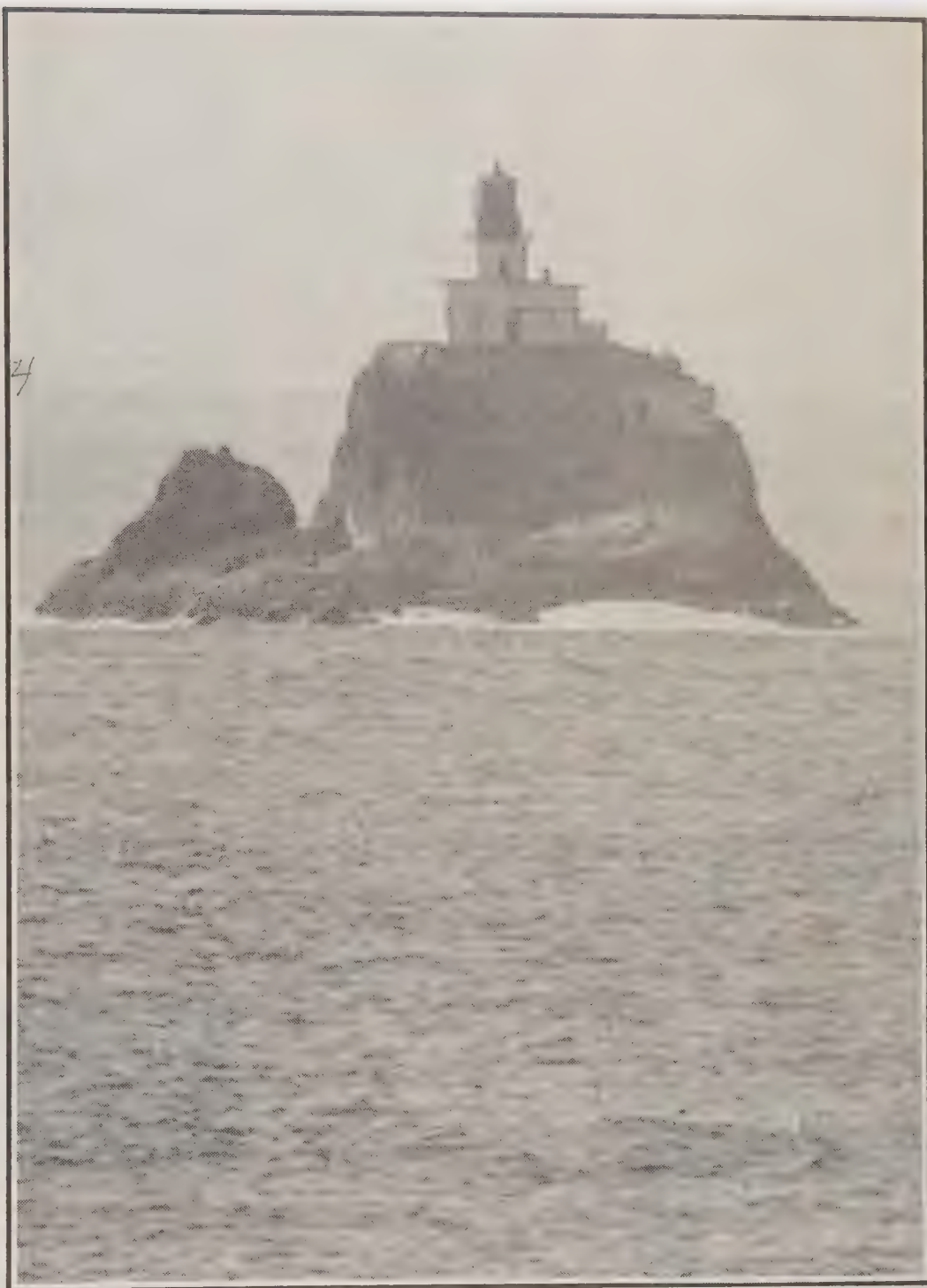
Outdoors, the rhythm of life dances, sometimes noisily.

On the rocks, on the sidewalk, on the roof and on the steps, common murres dressed in sooty-gray, brown and white feathers tend nests. Not just a few birds. Up to 10,000, depending on the year and El Niño.

More than three times as many common murres nest at the lighthouse than are found in all of Washington state, making the rock an important West Coast nesting area.

These seabirds aren't alone. Up to 1,000 Brandt's cormorants nest on the rock, along with black oystercatchers, pigeon guillemots and a few Western gulls.

About this time of year, people with telescopes can spot endangered brown pelicans gliding in on broad wings. Some pelicans will stay for the summer, while others will head north to dazzle tourists at Fort Stevens State Park in Warrenton with high-dive acts to catch fish.



The Daily Astorian — KARL MAASDAM

The Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, as seen from Ecola State Park, is currently owned and operated as a repository for cremation urns. Saturday it will become a wildlife refuge as well.

Thanks to three years of work, these pelicans, murres and the other seabirds using Tillamook Rock won't be bothered by people during nesting season.

You can thank Mimmi Mauricette, co-owner of the company that owns the lighthouse, and Roy Lowe, a biologist with the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service.

Last year, work begun by Lowe and Mauricette ended with an agreement bringing the lighthouse rock into the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge. The rock is one of a handful of privately owned islands in the system.

See Rock, Page 5

4.22.1994

Rock: Event set Saturday

Continued from Page 1

"It's a major contribution to the protection of seabirds along the coast," Lowe said. "It's really a great resource."

Saturday — as part of Earth Day weekend — the private and federal partnership will be celebrated with a ceremony at Ecola State Park. The day will start with a no-host picnic from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. A program to enhance awareness of the environment will last from 1 to 3 p.m.

Earthkids, a national children's environmental group based in Salem, and Elisabet Sahtouris, a noted ecologist, author and United Nations consultant, will be on hand during the afternoon. A video link will connect people at Ecola State Park with Earth Day weekend festivities at Waterfront Park in Portland.

Connections don't stop there. Video and computers will tie the groups with Earthkids stationed at lighthouses in Maine, Connecticut, New York, Florida and a few other states.

Technology gets some of the credit for bringing the lighthouse into the national refuge system.

Lowe, who works out of the Fish and Wildlife Service's office in Newport, specializes in seabirds. It's more than a job. He enjoys his work.

A few years ago, he caught part of a Portland television news story about

trespassers at the lighthouse, owned by Mauricette's company, Eternity at Sea, since 1980. He knew the rock from his work and decided to track down the owners, wondering if they'd sell the monolith to the government.

Mauricette wasn't interested in selling. But Eternity at Sea did the next best thing. The company agreed to stay off the island for the six months of nesting and give the wildlife agency a conservation easement to monitor seabirds. No money changed hands.

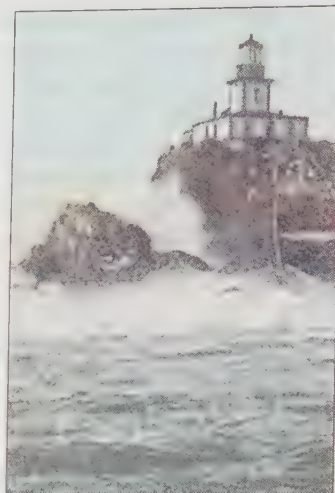
Mauricette, of Los Angeles, is no stranger to helping the environment. Eternity at Sea only allows urns at the lighthouse that are made out of recycled aluminum. She gives 10 percent of the company's revenue to environmental programs.

The woman who grew up on an island with a lighthouse at Key Biscayne, Fla., is chief executive officer of Networking for a Better World. The L.A.-headquartered company works in partnerships with non-profit groups dedicated to helping children, wildlife and the planet.

To say the least, Mauricette describes herself as an "active environmentalist." And the seabirds on the one-acre basalt rock off Ecola State Park will be much better off for it.

Why Tilly is terrible

A tidbit from GEORGE FLAVEL's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/george.flavel), in remembrance of the Dec. 12 storm that wasn't: "Dec. 14, 1894 — A report finally comes from the TILLAMOOK LIGHTHOUSE (aka Terrible Tilly) about the storm that recently knocked out power. For hours, the brave watchmen on lonely Tillamook rock listened to the awful howling of the wind and waters, trembling each moment for fear that the high tower would tumble over into the sea and carry every thing with it." The lighthouse is pictured in 1901.



"Waves rose all around them like great mountains, and although the top of the rock is fully 88 feet above extreme high tide, monster seas broke all over it. At one time when the hurricane was at its worst, amidst a most awful roaring of angry waters, a great wall of water struck the side of the rock with such force that it trembled as if from a violent shock of earthquake.

"As the mountain of water struck the great rock, it shot upwards, how high the keepers inside the lighthouse were unable to say, but all was darkness for a moment — an awful crash of breaking glass sounded above, followed instantly by a terrible noise, as if the ocean had gone skyward and come down directly on the roof of the lighthouse." Yikes.

12.19.2014 D.A.



One of the men in the picture was my great grandfather Werner Storm. We think the cook. He was on Tillamook Rock with Mr. Fog. Mr. Storm and Mr. Fog on Tillamook Rock.

My father and two uncles were at Pt. Adams C. G. Station. As Coast Guards they would transfer supplies to the men on the "Rock". The picture shows how that worked. The family joke was that they didn't want Mr. Storm to get wet because they were courting his three daughters (Louise, Roberta, and Bernice).



Donated by:
Terry Arnall 12-6-2010

6.12.2014

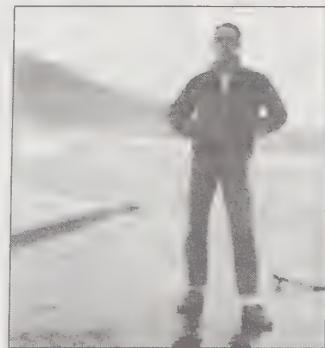
'Infamous Terrible Tilly' exhibit opens

CANNON BEACH — The Cannon Beach History Center & Museum will open the highly anticipated "The Infamous Terrible Tilly" exhibit at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, June 14. Former lighthouse keeper Lon Haynes will share stories from his time spent stationed at the lighthouse.

Haynes jokingly refers to himself as a former inmate of "the rock." He was stationed there from 1953 until 1957. The life of a Tillamook Rock Lighthouse keeper was secluded and, at times, lonely.

Keepers found ways to entertain themselves. Haynes will share tales of pranks, challenges with supply delivery and even how he got on and off the rock.

On a secluded basalt rock, just over a mile off Oregon's rocky shores lies the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse. It is considered one of the greatest engineering feats of the 19th century and remains shrouded in mystery. It took less than



Submitted photo

Lon Haynes smokes a cigarette during some off time on the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse.



Submitted photo

This image is from an issue of Life Magazine published in 1942 about the role of the Oregon Coast during World War II.



Submitted photo

This photo of the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse was most likely taken in 1939, but could have been earlier. It was taken prior to the U.S. Coast Guard taking over the management of the lighthouse from the U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses.

Opening Reception

5:30 p.m. Saturday, June 14

Cannon Beach
History Center and Museum

1387 S. Spruce St., Cannon Beach

503-436-9301

A protector of life and property all, may old-timers, newcomers and travelers along the way pause from the shore in memory of your humanitarian role."

The lighthouse was then auctioned off and spent time shuffling from one owner to another. There are rumors of owners with mob ties, claims of ghosts and a short time spent as a vacation rental.

The lighthouse was difficult to get to and so was claimed by sea birds and sea lions as the perfect stopping and nesting point.

600 long and arduous days to construct.

Terrible Tilly, as it became known, was in operation from 1881 until it was decommissioned by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1957. During its life as a fully functioning lighthouse, Tilly acted as a warning beacon to thousands of vessels skirting the coastline.

The Columbia River became a busy part of marine commerce in the mid-to-late

1800s. The waters surrounding the mouth of the Columbia River are still considered the most dangerous in the world.

The lighthouse was home to a crew of up to five men at a time. Women were never stationed there because of the difficulty and danger involved in getting on and off the rock.

In 1957, Tilly shone for the last time. On Sept. 1 of that year, lighthouse keeper Oswald Allik, the last civilian

keeper, wrote in the log book, "Farewell, Tillamook Rock Light Station. An era has ended. With this final entry, and not without sentiment, I return thee to the elements. You, one of the most notorious and yet most fascinating of the seaswept sentinels in the world; long the friend of the tempest-tossed mariner.

"Through howling gale, thick fog and driving rain your beacon has been a star of hope

and your foghorn a voice of encouragement. May the elements of nature be kind to you. For 77 years you have beamed your light across desolate acres of ocean. Keepers have come and gone; men lived and died; but you were faithful to the end. May your sunset years be good years. Your purpose is now only a symbol, but the lives you have saved and the service you have rendered are worthy of the highest respect.

Terrible Tillie, Where the Departed Rest Not Quite in Peace



WILLIAM YARDLEY

CANNON BEACH, Ore. — Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, a mile off the Oregon coast and dark for half a century, would be just another postcard from the past if not for all the dead people inside.

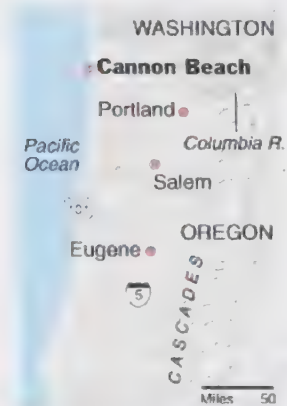
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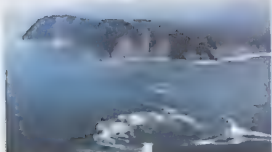
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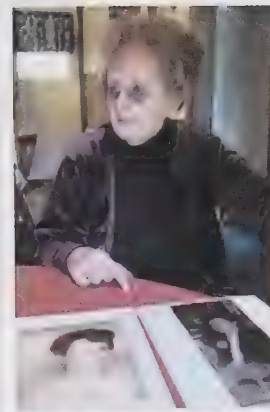


Peace at the last on an island in the Pacific is what they said they wanted; and, if they paid anywhere from \$1,000 to \$2,500 to have their cremated ashes placed in the lighthouse, that is what they were promised.

"That's what she talked about for years," Terri Reynolds recalled of her mother, Thelma, who was 87 when she died in 2004, many years after having paid to place her ashes in the lighthouse. "All you'll have to do is go to Cannon Beach and look out there and you'll know where I'm at," she said.

The big rock on which the lighthouse was built in the 1880s has never made for much of a sanctuary. About 20 miles south of the mouth of the Columbia River, it becomes an angry acre of basalt when big ocean waves slam across it. The lighthouse soon became known as Terrible Tillie. Dangerous and expensive to operate, it was decommissioned in 1957.

The rock has long since been reclaimed by cormorants and common murre, and the lighthouse is now the privately



owned Eternity by the Sea Columbarium. Except that neither eternity nor the sea is cooperating.

After a quarter century of soliciting souls, and after placing about 30 urns in the lighthouse, Eternity by the Sea has lost its license. The rock and the lighthouse are caked in guano, and the roof is leaking.

A state board says the owners have not kept accurate records of people placed there and that because urns sit on boards and concrete blocks, not in niches, the lighthouse does not even qualify as a columbarium.

Two urns were lost years ago when vandals reportedly broke open the doors. Birds quickly flew in and built nests before the doors were repaired.

Some families with relatives who were interred there are upset. So are others whose parents made payments before they died, only to have their children learn that the columbarium could not legally accept any more "honorary lighthouse keepers." The owners say that they have done nothing wrong, and that the state unfairly shut them down.

Even if the place were patched up tomorrow and allowed back into business, no one would be allowed to visit. A helicopter is the only means of transport; and, because Tillamook Rock is a privately owned part of the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex, it is even off limits to its owners during the mild weather of spring and summer when seabirds are nesting.

Nevertheless, the Web site for Eternity by the Sea still makes its pitch. "Honorary Lighthouse Keepers Wanted," it says. "We are currently not accepting new keepers but you can add your name to a waiting list where you will be notified when we can offer 'Columbarium Niche Options.' All future keepers will be offered a discount if their name is on this waiting list."

Ms. Reynolds and her sister, Jan Keffer, say they were misled by the lighthouse owners and have drafted a complaint to the Oregon Department of Justice.

Because the lighthouse lost its license in 1999 and was rejected in 2005 after it applied for a new one, Thelma Reynolds's ashes are kept by Ms. Keffer in Arizona. The daughters say the principal owner of the lighthouse, Mimi Morissette, a real estate developer near Hood River, Ore., has said she would return the \$1,000 their mother paid in 1980, but with no interest. Money, they say, is not the issue.

"What's important is to follow the wishes of the loved ones," Terri Reynolds said.

Ms. Morissette bought the lighthouse in 1980 with a group of investors for \$50,000 and began promoting it as a columbarium.

Over the years, she said, she has presold about 100 urns, though perhaps fewer, and she said most of the money had gone to maintenance and legal fees.

She said she has returned three deposits, though she would not say to whom, and the identity of people whose ashes are stored at the lighthouse is not public record. In 2005, according to the state, the balance in the columbarium's endowment was \$451.51.

Ms. Morissette said the state was the problem, not her, and that the lighthouse was essentially shut down for a technical violation, having been late in renewing its license

back in the 1990s. She said the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board, which controls the licensing process, was deliberately keeping the lighthouse out of the increasingly lucrative industry of storing ashes, what those in the business call cremains.

Cremation has become much more common across the country and particularly in the Northwest. In Oregon, said David J. Koach, executive director of the Mortuary and Cemetery Board, about 65 percent of people now choose cremation, about twice the national rate.

In 1975, the state rate was about 15 percent. But Mr. Koach rejected the assertion that the board, whose members are appointed by the governor, was somehow protecting others in the industry when it rejected the application for a new license.

He cited a 23-page summary of the decision, which noted that investigators for the board found multiple violations that included poor record-keeping and improper storage of urns.

"There's no there there," Mr. Koach said. "There aren't any niches. How can they sell them if they're not there?"

Ms. Morissette said she was planning a major renovation next spring, before the migratory birds return. Her long-range plans for the lighthouse remain ambitious: raising about \$1 million, reapplying for a license or skipping that process altogether, and constructing walls of niches in titanium that could store 300,000 urns.

As for concerns that the current urns are not well protected, she said, "People ask me what if a tsunami hits the lighthouse, and I tell every person their second choice better be to be buried at sea."

Waves and the birds will certainly continue to come. Jerry Jeffs, whose mother, Nora Bailey Knight, bought an urn back in the 1980s and was placed in the lighthouse after she died in 1991, said she worried about how her stylish mother, a former buyer for a department store, was withstanding the elements.

"She didn't even like bird poop on her car," Ms. Jeffs said.

Terrible Tilly focus of exhibit

History center highlights the saga of the dangerous Tillamook Rock Lighthouse

Story by ERICK BENGEL
EO Media Group

Atop Tillamook Rock, a mile and a quarter off the shores of Tillamook Head, sits a squat, dilapidated lighthouse.

Though formally christened Tillamook Rock Lighthouse, the structure, built between 1879 and 1881, is nicknamed "Terrible Tilly" because it is best known as a site of dangerous coastal weather and almost 20 recorded deaths.

The lighthouse and its history are the subject of an exhibit at the Cannon Beach History Center and Museum called "The Infamous Terrible Tilly," on display through December.

The exhibit chronicles Terrible Tilly's saga – from its construction by the now-defunct U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses, through its decommissioning in 1957, up until its informal adoption by the U.S. Forest Service.

In addition to large illustrative panels, the exhibit includes artifacts from the lighthouse itself, such as the light-keepers' logbook from 1881 and a

piece of the original Fresnel lens. Visitors can also watch a 2009 video interview with James "Shipwreck Jim" Gibbs, who, at age 25, worked as a light-keeper at Tillamook Rock from 1945-46 while serving in the U.S. Coast Guard.

A 'cursed spot'

Even before the federal government sought to build a lighthouse in the Tillamook Head area, the local Native American population considered Tillamook Rock and the waters around it a "cursed spot," said history center Executive Director Elaine Murdy-Trucke, who wrote the copy for the exhibit.

Violent winds and powerful waves regularly hit the rock from different angles, often breaching the top. Vessels have been known to capsize or shatter against the jagged reef, "which is why it was probably a good idea to have some sort of beacon there," she said.

However, "the lighthouse was not wanted around here," Murdy-Trucke noted. Apart from the risk involved in raising a lighthouse on the rock,



Submitted photo

From the surface of the ocean to the top of the lighthouse is about 134 feet – and the waves of Tillamook Rock breach even that height.

the Tillamook Head region was a "really tucked-away spot. That's why people liked it, and they really didn't want to have a light shining on them," she said.

In 1881, the *Lupatia*, a British ship sailing from Japan and bound for Portland, crashed against the reef of Tillamook Rock. All 16 to 17 members of the crew drowned; only the dog survived.

A 'terrific undertaking'

The U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses initially planned to erect the lighthouse on the promontory of Tillamook Head. But the only viable place was so high up that the light would have been invisible through the foggy, inhospitable conditions, so the bureau set its sights on Tillamook



Submitted photo

The jagged reefs of Tillamook Rock pose a danger to vessels that approach the seastack. In 1881, a British ship named *The Lupatia* slammed against the reef, and all 16 to 17 crew members died; only the dog survived.

Rock instead.

Construction of the lighthouse, which began in fall 1879, took less than 600 days.

"To build a lighthouse there was a terrific undertaking," even for experienced builders, because they were "fighting the forces of nature all the time," Gibbs says in his interview.

Together, the 62-foot lighthouse and the basalt seastack beneath it rise roughly 134 feet above the ocean.

"It's incredible that they were ever able to do it, if you think about the kinds of storms we have here," Murdy-Trucke said. "There was no shelter. They were living in little A-frame tents, constantly soaking wet."

The light of the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse – then a ker-

osene flame refracted and magnified through a Fresnel lens – shone for the first time on Jan. 21, 1881. Over the years, Terrible Tilly – which was originally budgeted for \$50,000 and ended up costing \$123,492.82 – "has always been considered one of the most difficult lighthouses to equip and attend to," Gibbs says.

'Left to the birds'

In 1939, the U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses was subsumed into the U.S. Coast Guard, which deactivated the lighthouse in 1957 after installing a beacon buoy just off the shore of Tillamook Head, Murdy-Trucke said.

Since then, the ownership of Terrible Tilly has repeatedly changed hands.

In 1973, it was sold to a New York couple, the Hupmans, who, having never seen it in person, hoped to turn it into a vacation rental. Recognizing the futility of that idea after actually visiting the rock, the Hupmans sold it to a Portland man, Max Shillock Jr., who bought it with money he had allegedly stolen from elderly ladies.

Shillock then sold it in 1980 (for twice the amount he had paid) to a woman, Mimi Morrisette, who converted it into a columbarium named *Eternity at Sea*, where more than 20 fami-

lies stored the cremated remains of their loved ones.

However, *Eternity at Sea* lost its funerary license and declared bankruptcy in 1999 after vandals broke into the lighthouse and tossed a number of urns into the ocean.

Back in 1981, the government had added the Tillamook Rock Lighthouse to the National Register of Historic Places. Now, the U.S. Forest Service maintains it as home for seals, sea lions, seagulls, pelicans, and other maritime animals.

"(A)s to who technically owns it, well, that's been left to the birds," Murdy-Trucke said.

Falling apart

It may appear sturdy and seamless from shore, but the lighthouse has continued to fall into disrepair. Flying rocks have broken the windows. The iron roof of the lighthouse base is rusted and collapsing. Much of the plaster on the three-foot-thick granite walls has sloughed off. The interior is overrun with mildew, the exterior with bird droppings.

Unless someone makes a point to restore it – or at least preserve it – the lighthouse's best days are probably behind it.

"Because it's so dangerous and difficult to get out there," Murdy-Trucke said, "I think it's going to end up falling apart."

7. 2014

Coast Weekend



Tales from Terrible Tilly

Every wondered what it was like to live in the TILLA-MOOK LIGHTHOUSE when it was still operational?

Thanks to JIM FURNISH, who invited the Ear to lunch with LON HAYNES, a former lighthouse keeper on "Terrible Tilly" (pictured, lower left), the Ear had a chance to find out firsthand. Lon and his wife, LAVINA, are pictured, upper left.

Coast Guardsman Lon was 18 or 19 when he was offered the post, and was taken aback when he realized it was on top of a rocky island.

He had to get up to the lighthouse by breeches buoy, i.e. put on rubber pants attached to a line dangling from a boom attached to the island that jugged out over the boat. Then OSWALD ALLIK, the last civilian lightkeeper, would swing the boom to hoist the hapless visitor onto "The Rock."

Oswald got a bit slower as he got older. "One time I went into water with a cigarette in my mouth, hat on my head and a duffle bag, with Oswald on the boom," Lon recalled, "and that's the way I came out."

Pictured right, from left, Oswald, ALAN RICHARDS and Lon, in a photo taken in front of the lighthouse.

5.3.2013

Lon was stationed there for six weeks on and three weeks off for 20 months. "During storms, the waves came," he said. "You'd hear a thump, count to four or five, then you would see the green water. Every third one or so came over the lighthouse." Sometimes the waves would even pick up rocks from below and hurl them through the light tower. Even so, Lon admitted that he'd go out for a quick look between waves, not even thinking of the danger.

Two of the highlights of his stay were the attic full of magazines to peruse (dating from the 1800s through World War II), and having a cozy private room with 3-foot thick walls that kept out the sound of the foghorn.

Lon's detailed account of daily life on Terrible Tillie (with photos) can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/tillyrock>. The lighthouse is now both dark and silent, but fortunately, Lon's memories help keep its history alive.

She was a **TERRIBLE BEAUTY** ...

by **LeeAnn Neal**
for **Coast River Business Journal**

It saved the life of many a sailor during its 76 years of service, but Tillamook Rock Light now is synonymous with death and destruction to those familiar with her story.

The lighthouse is perched atop Tillamook Rock, a 1-acre basalt monolith located about a mile offshore between Seaside and Cannon Beach.

From 1881 until it was deactivated in 1957, the northernmost beacon on the Oregon coast guided vessels to and from the Columbia River Bar, 20 miles to the north.

Yet before the lighthouse was ever built, local residents took to calling it the "hoodoo light" and predicted it would never be anything but a disaster.

In some ways, they were right.

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Tillamook Rock, as it appeared in 1891. Photo by S.B. Crow



This photo shows the obvious signs of decay, such as rust on the tower, at the abandoned Tillamook Rock Light station. Photo by U.S. Coast Guard

March 2013

Where to build it?

There had been general agreement that a lighthouse was needed in the area to assist ships bound to and from the bar. So in 1878, Congress appropriated \$50,000 to build a lighthouse on Tillamook Head, an outcropping of land directly east of Tillamook Rock.

However, the federal Lighthouse Board eventually decided the rock was a superior location because the headland often was cloaked in dense fog. That, and construction would require building a 20-mile wagon road for transporting building materials.

In June 1879, H.S. Wheeler, who had been appointed superintendent of construction for the project, accessed the rock by boat. Although the sea was too rough that day to allow him to unpack his instruments for an official survey, he was able to take basic measurements using a pocket tape measure.

Wheeler's general observations included this written note: "Though the execution of the work will be a task of labor and difficulty, accompanied with great expense, yet the benefits to the commerce seeking the mouth of the Columbia River will derive from a light and fog signal located there will warrant all the labor and expense involved."

A few months later, the Lighthouse Board hired Portland master mason John R. Trewavas to conduct an official survey of the rock prior to blasting off the basalt monolith's top and beginning construction.

Trewavas, who had worked on a lighthouse off the English coast, was to become the rock's first casualty. Aboard a surfboat en route to the rock, he slipped on the wet surface and was swept into the churning water. His body was never located.

The story of his death, reported in newspapers and passed from person to person in Oregon's north coast communities, did nothing to earn support for the project.

Or to dissuade the general population that the project was doomed.

Still, Wheeler was able to hire enough laborers to camp in an A-frame canvas tent on the rock while blasting off its top and building a derrick (a type of crane with a pivoting boom).

The derrick was necessary because the rough seas surrounding the rock kept vessels from gaining close access.

The crew also constructed lightkeeper quarters, a fog signal room and the lighthouse itself.

Men were transported from their vessels to the rock and back by means of a breeches buoy – a life preserver ring outfitted with a large pair of pants – connected to lines that were in turn connected to a large boom, part of the derrick.

When seas were particularly rough, it was common for a man in the breeches buoy to be inadvertently dunked under water or drenched by crashing waves.

It took 500 long days to construct the lighthouse facilities. In the end, the project was widely heralded as a modern engineering marvel.

Another disaster

Yet disaster struck again shortly before the lighthouse and surrounding

structures were completed in January 1881, when the barque *Lupatia* wrecked near the rock.

Sailing in thick fog and high winds, the vessel veered too close to the shore. Wheeler said he heard the sounds of a frantic crew and ordered his workers to light a bonfire and place lanterns in the tower in hopes of signaling the ship.

But despite their efforts, the ship capsized, killing all 16 crew members. Their bodies were found washed up along Tillamook Head the following morning.

The only survivor was the ship's dog, which Wheeler and his workers had heard howling most of the previous night.

The light was lit Jan. 21, 1881. In short time, owing to its vulnerability to crashing ocean waves, the dicey commute and its deadly reputation, the facility earned the nickname "Terrible Tilly" from locals and lightkeepers alike.

Regardless, the lighthouse's First Order Fresnel lens shined its beam an impressive 18 miles in all directions, depending on the weather. The lamp worked in conjunction with an incandescent oil vapor lamp and a steam foghorn.

For decades after its inaugural lighting, Tillamook Rock Lighthouse continued to shepherd ships to safety on their way to and from the Columbia River Bar.

But not without hardships.

A tough job

Lightkeeper duty on the cramped rock was challenging. The four men on duty for three months at a time were given little to do but read, talk, sleep and stare at the shoreline.

The isolated station went through four principal keepers in its first two years.

Disputes among personnel were common, sometimes leading to fisticuffs. A punching bag hanging in the lightkeepers' quarters served to relive the tension.

"Everywhere I looked, the place took on more of the aspects of an insane asylum instead of what I had pictured a lighthouse to be," wrote James A. Gibbs, a Tillamook Rock lightkeeper from 1945 until 1946 in his book, "Tillamook Light," published in 1979.

"When night came on dark and eerie, I could see the hint of lights at the distant resorts of Seaside and Cannon Beach. I knew for the first time what men imprisoned at Alcatraz, in the center of San Francisco Bay, must have felt."

Gibbs cited tales of a lighthouse ghost based on inexplicable moaning sounds heard throughout the station.

Over the decades, a number of lightkeepers told of hearing cries from below the rock. Others talked of sighting a phantom ship.

To this day, there are those on the mainland who claim to see ghostly lights from the tower – despite the fact that the Fresnel lens was removed long ago.

Still others recount a Native American legend in which an underwater tunnel connects the living ashore with the dead who inhabit the rock.

Worse than isolation and ghost stories for the lightkeepers were the frequent storms that pummeled the small island. Significant storms occurred in 1880, during the station's construction, 1894 and 1919.

Shortly after the January 1880 storm, builder Frederick A. Talbott wrote of the event, "at 6 o'clock in the evening, the hurricane burst and the workmen witnessed a sight as they had never seen before, for the whole coast seemed in the grip of it with Tillamook Rock the vortex."

An angry ocean

The worst storm to hammer the rock blew up in 1934.

Around 10 p.m. on Oct. 20, the crew – principal keeper William Hill, first assistant Henry Jenkins, Hugo Hansen and Robert Fogg – took note of a howling east wind and light rain. Later that evening, the wind increased to a gale-force 100 mph and shifted to the southwest.

By 3 a.m. the next morning, the seas were towering and throwing spray over the top of the rock.

At 9:30, Jenkins awoke soaked through by a wave that had crashed over his bed.

Subsequent waves slammed at the shuttered windows, breaking through and shattering the glass. The waves flooded the lightkeepers' quarters and hurled timber, boulders and fish at the hapless outpost.

Then, ever-bigger waves crashed over the lighthouse tower itself, snuffing its light, crashing through the lantern panes, demolishing the Fresnel lens and cascading down the spiral stairwell.

The angry ocean swept away the station's derrick – which had been secured to the rock with iron bolts buried more than 3 feet beneath the rock's surface – and snapped its telephone cable and heating pipes.

LIGHTHOUSE

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Wading through water in the cold and dark, soaked to the skin, the men several times were forced to hang from the station's rafters to avoid the dangerous waves and high water.

Despite the surrounding chaos and destruction, the crew worked round the clock repairing what damage it could. While replacing broken window glass with emergency wooden shutters, Hansen severely cut his hand on a jagged piece of glass.

With the fog signal and lantern both inoperable, the crew set up a temporary fixed light to help guide any ships that may have had the misfortune to be sailing nearby.

Jenkins, an amateur radio enthusiast, built a shortwave transmitter/receiver from broadcast receiver parts, batteries, tinfoil scraps and brass. Two days later, on the evening of Oct. 23, he made a successful call to an Astoria HAM operator.

Jenkins asked him to relay a message to the lighthouse superintendent regarding the station's significant damage, its broken light and fog signal and Hansen's injury, and to request supplies be sent for additional repairs.

Jenkins continued to transmit messages from the makeshift radio until the seas calmed and help could be dispatched to the rock.

The Oregonian newspaper ran an article Oct. 24 headlined "Storm douses light on Tillamook Head." News of the calamity spread around the globe.

In a subsequent official report, Lighthouse District Superintendent R.R. Tinkman wrote that the crew's efforts during the storm were "an example of sheer heroism in the face of almost overpowering odds.... It was a titanic struggle."

Struggles continue

It took several months to repair damage at Tillamook Rock Light. However, it never again boasted a Fresnel lens.

Instead, workers replaced the lens with an electric Great Lakes-type aero-

marine revolving beacon protected by a wire mesh cage.

By 1957, Tillamook Rock Light had become overly expensive to maintain as a navigational relic. Its last keeper, Oswald Allik, that year switched off the light for good. The station was officially decommissioned.

The U.S. Coast Guard replaced the light with an automated offshore buoy.

The federal government sold the rock to private interests. A succession of owners tried to restore it over the years, but the rock's inaccessibility hampered their efforts – a lesson that should have been learned years before.

In 1980, real estate developer Mimi Morrisette and a handful of investors bought the lighthouse for \$50,000.

Her Eternity by the Sea Marketing group then transformed it into the Eternity at Sea Columbarium. (A columbarium is a building where funeral urns are stored in niches.)

A New York Times article published in 2007 reported that Eternity lost its Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board license in 1999. State officials said the owners had not kept accurate records of the cremated remains placed there.

Also, said the officials, because the urns were resting on boards and concrete blocks rather than in niches, the lighthouse did not qualify as a columbarium.

Today the rock, with its ever-decaying station, is a federally protected wildlife refuge, home to nesting common murres and cormorants.

Despite the light's troubled history, there were those who regretted its passing. Longtime lightkeeper Bob Gerloff, who was forced to retire in the 1930s, refused to take shore leave when his turn came. He loved the rock and worried about it continually after returning to life on the land in Seaside.

Each evening, Gerloff walked to the shore to ensure the Tillamook Rock Light had been turned on.

Even Gibbs came around. Of finishing his tour of duty, he wrote: "I somehow knew I was going to miss the natural surroundings; the untamed, changing seascape and the moods of weather.

"Above all, I would miss the ocean, a capricious destroyer yet a thing of beauty."



This Oregon Journal newspaper clipping depicts the last crew to serve at Tillamook Rock Light, pictured here in 1956.



ABOVE: An illustration of a breeches buoy in action. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. RIGHT: This First Order Fresnel lens, photographed in Point Arena, Calif., resembles the one formerly housed in the Tillamook Rock Light tower. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



OFFBEAT OREGON

TILLAMOOK LIGHTHOUSE GHOST GREETED NEW KEEPER ON FIRST NIGHT

By Finn J.D. John

One grim winter morning, near the end of the Second World War, a Coast Guard seaman named James A. Gibbs, Jr., was looking apprehensively out over an angry sea from the rail of the 52-foot motor lifeboat *Triumph*. Far out over the field of towering pyramid-shaped waves, a tiny speck was just coming into view—his destination.

"Tillamook Rock," the boatswain muttered, as a seasick Gibbs silently fought to hang onto his breakfast. "I wouldn't take that duty on a bet."

Gibbs might not have either, but he didn't have much choice. That tiny, lonely speck in the middle of an angry gray ocean was his new duty station: Tillamook Rock, a half-acre hunk of granite with a lighthouse perched dubiously upon its crest in the middle of the open sea, known to the initiated as "Terrible Tilly."

In his book, written many years later, Gibbs referred to Tillamook Rock as a "pint-size Alcatraz," and indeed, his transfer there had a lot in common with a prison sentence. It was widely known that assignments to Tillamook Rock were given as a punishment for troublemakers, and Gibbs fit that profile pretty well. His record with the Coast Guard was, as he puts it, "checkered."

Gibbs' trouble had started one night very early in the war, when he was on beach patrol duty. His patrol dog, Pluto, had fallen off a bluff while chasing birds, and was injured. In trying to call for help, Gibbs and his partner had gotten the codes mixed up and accidentally sent a message that an enemy force had landed.

As if that weren't enough, while waiting for the help they thought was coming for poor Pluto they doctored him up a bit with a few nips from a bottle of whiskey that they claimed (with, shall we say, less than 100-percent believability) to have "found on the beach." (Gibbs doesn't mention, specifically, whether he and his comrade "shared" Pluto's whiskey, but anyone who thinks they didn't probably still believes in the Tooth Fairy.)

All of this wouldn't have ordinarily been a problem. But because of

the mixed-up radio codes, their call for help was being answered not by a friend with a Jeep and blanket for Pluto, but by a massive detachment of Army soldiers ready for a firefight—all of whom were furious when they learned the truth. They'd been roused out of their warm bunks and turned out locked and loaded to do their heroic bit—only to learn their mission was just to rescue two bumbling Coast Guard mopes and their drunk dog.

This incident had humiliated the Coast Guard in front of the Army, and Gibbs' part in it earned him some special attention from his supervisors—attention that he'd responded poorly to. One thing had led to another, and by early 1945 he'd racked up enough minor and major disciplinary infractions that he was on every commanding officer's "Usual Suspects" list, and was actually worried about getting a dishonorable discharge.

Instead, he found himself assigned for duty on Tillamook Rock.

Gibbs' arrival on the island was a punishment all by itself. The motor lifeboat stood off several dozen feet from the sheer rocky cliff face, rising and falling a good ten feet with each swell it rode through. Gibbs, wearing a breeches buoy—basically a pair of big heavy pants with a life ring around the hips, attached to a heavy cable with a hook at the end—stood on the boat's deck while the boatswain's mate maneuvered it to within grabbing distance of a big ring dangling from the end of a crane. The terrified Gibbs had to grab the ring and hook it, whereupon the crane picked him up off the deck of the boat and swung him over sea and rocks and down onto the cement landing pad.

It was the beginning of a new chapter in Gibbs' life, and one that would change him in a hundred ways—an experience he wouldn't have given up for anything. But before he could enjoy those benefits, he had to get through his first night on the rock—the roughest night of his life.

The thing was, Tillamook Rock Lighthouse was haunted. Or at least, so Gibbs' three fellow crew



members assured him over dinner that night. They spoke darkly but matter-of-factly of mysterious footsteps, and unexplainable noises in the tower.

Convinced this was nothing more than an attempt to razz the new guy, Gibbs finished supper and retired to catch a few hours of sleep before his midnight watch started. Opening, for ventilation, the heavy porthole of storm-battered inch-thick glass that served for a window, he climbed into his bunk and went to sleep.

He awoke with a start several hours later. What had that noise been? He peered out, but the blackness in the lighthouse, a mile and a half away from shore, was absolute. The light switch was by the door; he'd have to get out of bed and cross the room to flip it on.

There it was again! A footstep. And another, and another—heel, toe; heel-toe. And they were coming closer.

"For some reason, I just couldn't move," Gibbs recalled in his book. "I grew rigid and tried to call out, but the utterances seemed to choke in my throat. After hearing two more steps, I knew that whatever it was,

was standing next to my bed. Then came that terrifying moment when something passed near my throat, so close that the breeze fanned my face."

Now, at last, Gibbs' paralysis passed. With a desperate roar, seizing the pillow and holding it before him, he charged his attacker—tripped over something—went sprawling to the floor at the foot of the light switch—scrambled to his feet and flipped it up. There, before him, stood the "ghost":

"A mammoth goose with a broken wing sat in the middle of the floor," Gibbs recounted. "Evidently blinded by the beacon, it had flown through the open porthole and broken its wing en route."

Gibbs picked the goose up and hustled it out of the lighthouse, stowing it in a sheltered spot there. (The goose's wing was most likely just bruised, not broken, since it was gone the next day.) Then he climbed back into his bunk and tried to go back to sleep.

When he reported for his watch an hour or two later, the keeper he was relieving stared at him. "What's the matter with ya?" he asked. "Ya

look like you seen a ghost."

It was to be a long and dreadful night for Gibbs. His nerves, already keyed up by the goose incident, were not helped when an unearthly moaning started coming from a nearby empty room. Seeking some reading material to take his mind off his fears, he soon found himself reading a maritime magazine—with an article about a haunting at the Navassa Lighthouse in the Caribbean. The story ended with the lightkeeper going mad and being carried from the lighthouse in a straightjacket.

And all the while, that weird, never-to-be-explained moaning was going on in the other room.

"It was one of the longest nights of my life," he wrote.

(Sources: Gibbs, James A. *Tillamook Light*. Portland: Binford 1979; Smitten, Susan. *Ghost Stories of Oregon*. Edmonton: Ghost House. 2001; www.atlasobscura.com)
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OFFBEAT OREGON

To get help building Tillamook Rock Light, supervisors had to be sneaky

By Finn J.D. John

The eight strangers must have been a little puzzled when they arrived in Astoria, in the fall of 1878.

They'd been brought in at considerable expense from far away by the U.S. Lighthouse Board to work on a new lighthouse construction project. But now that they were finally here, they weren't even allowed to go into town for a drink. They were soon whisked away, across the river onto the lonesome wilds of the Washington Territory, and put up in an empty lightkeeper's house at Cape Disappointment.

So, where was the lighthouse they'd been hired to work on? All they knew was that it was on a small, rocky island. But where?

More than three weeks dragged by. Finally, when the seas were relatively calm, the revenue cutter *Thomas Corwin* arrived to take them to the job site. And an hour or so later, their eyes widened with horror as they beheld what they'd signed up to build.

Staring at the tiny speck of granite jutting out of the flying spray and foam, the workers now understood why their employer had been so secretive — and why it had been necessary to recruit them from far-distant cities that had never heard of Tillamook Rock.

The Rock was a fist-shaped hunk of granite shooting straight up out of the sea, a mile and a half away from the coast of Oregon, rising to a height of about 120 feet above the waves. And although the day was calm and the sea fairly smooth, the workers could immediately see that getting onto the rock would be neither easy nor safe. Indeed, as they would later learn, it was word of master mason John R. Trewaves' death trying to clamber onto the rock — he'd slipped and fallen into the sea and been sucked under before anyone could grab him, never to be seen again — that had made it impossible for the government to find anyone in Oregon willing to work on the job.

Now, looking up at this horrible pile of granite from the thwarts of their surfboat, as the unruly and frothy seas sloshed against the rock, they were about to perform the exact maneuver that had killed Trewaves. They would have to wait for the boat

to be in the crest of a wave, leap onto the rock as the boat descended 10 feet into the wave's trough, and scramble as fast as they could to get high enough that the next wave would not wash them off.

Well, they may have been sucked into taking the job, and they were surely scared nearly out of their wits — but the eight quarrymen were not cowards. They stepped forward, ready to do their best. But only four of them were able to get onto the rock before the surfboat caught a wave badly and smashed into the granite surface, doing substantial damage and sending the boat hurrying back to the cutter.

With a line stretched between the cutter and the rock, they proceeded to load hammers, drills, ringbolts, food, water and canvas tents. And then the cutter retreated, leaving those four men behind, alone on a half-acre guano-covered rock jutting out of an increasingly angry sea.

Those four men were, as a near-certainty, the first humans ever to spend a night on Tillamook Rock. In fact, it was five days before the seas moderated enough to land the rest of the party. And almost as soon as they did, the rock welcomed them with one of the massive gales for which that corner of Oregon is famous. The wind screamed, the seas hit the rock hard enough that the men could feel the stone tremble beneath their feet, and sheets of flying, frothy seawater blanketed the entire island. Everything the men had was soaked through with saltwater.

But they made it through, and soon spectators on the mainland could watch their progress through spyglasses from the point. From the beginning, the locals had viewed the scheme to put a lighthouse on the rock as sheer madness, but now it looked as if they were actually going to pull it off.

But then, there hadn't really been much of a choice. By the late 1870s it had become all too clear to the U.S. Lighthouse Board that a light would have to be stationed south of the Columbia. There were, at the time, two at its mouth — Point Adams on the Oregon side, and Cape Disappointment on the Washington shore — but these couldn't be seen far enough out to sea to keep ships from getting



into deadly trouble on the shoals and reefs off Tillamook Head, especially on foggy days.

So the government allocated \$50,000 for the job and started looking for a good place to put it.

It quickly became clear that there really wasn't one. Tillamook Head seemed a logical place, but it was 1,000 feet high; a light there would be invisible in heavy fog — exactly the weather condition in which a light was most needed.

And then...there was The Rock.

So Tillamook Rock was scouted by district lighthouse superintendent H.S. Wheeler — who managed, after many attempts, to get first himself and then, on a second attempt, his surveying instruments onto the rock in the summer of 1879.

He was almost certainly the first human ever to set foot on the thing.

The investigation proved that a lighthouse could be put on the rock. But it would require a great deal of dynamite to level off its top, and getting on and off the thing was a matter of deadly peril — as was soon demonstrated by the death of John Trewaves.

Still, the only alternative was to accept the loss of dozens of lives and thousands of tons of shipping every year in preventable shipwrecks. That was unacceptable. And so the Lighthouse Board agreed to go ahead with it, and sent emissaries to San Francisco and other faraway ports in search of workers gullible enough to sign onto what the locals considered

a suicide mission.

Once there, the crew on the rock worked as quickly as they could, blasting and drilling and chipping out a level surface and laying the massive stone blocks — pinned together with heavy copper rods — of which the lighthouse was to be built. Supplies were at first landed via a cable stretched from the rock to the mast of the Thomas Corwin. This was also the workers' only way on or off the island; they'd hang beneath the cable in a breeches buoy and, more often than not, get dunked in the sea at least once when a wave hit the ship. Later a crane was built, which picked supplies off the deck of the ship.

It was a job to remember. The days were usually full of hard and tedious work, and the nights were occasionally full of terror and dread. For the entire winter of 1879-1880 the crew was camped out on that tiny chip of granite under siege by an angry sea, first in a tent and later in a rough wooden shack. That first winter, a hurricane carried off the storehouse, and it was several hungry, fretful weeks before the seas were calm enough to bring the men food.

The following winter would be easier; a summer's worth of construction had provided them with sturdy stone walls to hide behind when the massive hurricane-driven waves slammed themselves into the granite. It was still very hard to find workers willing to take jobs on the rock, though. There is a rumor that the services of Astoria's shanghaiers

were tapped to fill this need, and, although that seems unlikely, chances are pretty good that the supervisors dealt with sailors' boardinghouse masters and other shady labor contractors whose men had no choice but to go.

All through 1880 they worked, and by January of the following year the light was almost ready to shine. The workers were given added motivation to move as fast as humanly possible when, on Jan. 6, the 1,300-ton British ship *Lupatia* sank within sight of the rock, leaving a three-foot section of mainmast jutting out of the water as a silent reminder of just how much depended on their speed. (The only survivor was a dog.)

Finally, on January 21, 1881, the wick of the great lantern was touched to flame for the first time, and the angry North Pacific was lighted for the first time with a powerful beam from the top of Tillamook Rock.

The men had proven that it was possible to build a lighthouse on the least hospitable half-acre of land in the entire continent. Now the question was, could they keep it?

We'll talk about that challenge next time.

(Sources: Gibbs, James A. *Tillamook Light*. Portland: Binford, 1979; www.atlasobscura.com)

Finn J.D. John teaches at Oregon State University and writes about odd tidbits of Oregon history. For details, see <http://finnjohn.com>. To contact him or suggest a topic: finn2@beatoregon.com or 541-357-2222.



Monday, April 27, 2009

North Head Light should be stabilized

Seek a longterm solution to the rot that has penetrated the peninsula landmark

Monday, April 27, 2009

North Head Lighthouse isn't falling down, but it sure is ugly.

Oh, it still looks scenic from a distance, much as it has on countless postcards, salmon labels and visitor brochures since construction 111 years ago. Built on the north approach to the mouth of the Columbia in response to a rash of deadly shipwrecks at the end of the 19th century, North Head is a Pacific Northwest icon and a major tourist attraction.

In pragmatic terms, it is little more than a tall seaside platform for a navigational beacon. In these days of global positioning satellites, lighthouses are still marginally useful but easily replaced by metal towers. In the case of North Head, this means the U.S. Coast Guard is in the process of transferring its title to Washington State Parks.

The state's interest in ownership acknowledges that lighthouses continue to exert a powerful influence upon our imaginations as reminders of the days of sail and maritime heroism. But the state doesn't have money to spend on orphaned lighthouses, which naturally sit atop coastal headlands exposed to some of the world's worst weather. Nor is it in the Coast Guard's interest to lavish many resources on eccentric historical towers.

This condition of limbo has not been kind to North Head, whose three-foot thick concrete and stone base is crumbling. So far mostly cosmetic, this rot extends inward 6 to 8 inches. A related systemic problem requires correcting how the structure "breathes," in order to keep trapped condensation from creating a variety of problems, such as freezing inside and cracking the lighthouse's structure.

Fixing all this may cost \$2 million, a daunting sum at any time but particularly so in a world recession.

We can do nothing, we can embark on a probably protracted fund-raising process to fix it, or we can patch it up for now and hope for a lasting solution in the future.

It is hard to imagine how any such structure would do in the force 9 earthquake that scientists predict will strike this area sooner or later. Certainly before trying to land a \$2 million government handout for restoration, considerable attention must be given to this issue and whether this scale of investment can be reasonably expected to ensure the lighthouse's survival.

This doesn't mean the lighthouse's many fans or Washington State Parks should continue to let it go to rack and ruin. Significant work may be achievable with grants and volunteer labor. It will take longer but will at the same time be more gratifying in terms of instilling a sense of community ownership of this proud but battered sentinel on the edge of the Pacific.

It should be stabilized for now while we seek a longer-term solution.

Related Links

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Cape Blanco Light

Port Orford, Oregon

Cape Blanco is the southernmost of Oregon's lights. It is also the oldest original tower in Oregon. The light was proposed in 1864, and a [first-order lens](#) was ordered from Henri LaPaute, of Paris. The light was finally lit for the first time on December 20, 1870.

Today, the 59 foot tower stands on restricted Coast Guard grounds near Cape Blanco State Park. In 1936 the original lens was replaced with a Second Order rotating fresnel. In 1992, vandals broke into the lantern room and smashed several sections of the lens, including one of the eight bull's-eyes. Two years later, after nearly \$20,000 in repairs, Cape Blanco's fresnel shone again.

Access to the light is restricted, but the gates are opened daily April 1st to October 31st..







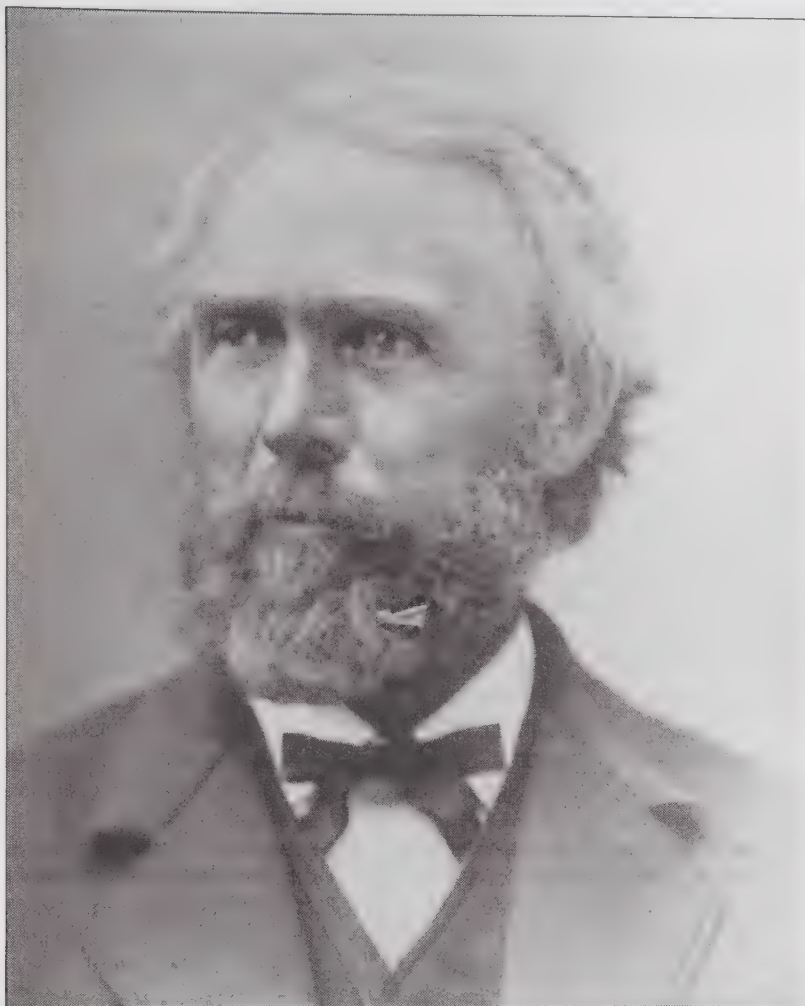
Northern
California



Tired of watching mariners die, lighthouse keeper started

a rescue

service



By Finn J.D. John

It was the Ides of March, 1865. Captain I. Lewis, commander of the 300-ton bark *Industry*, was staring at the mouth of the Columbia River.

He'd been staring east for two straight weeks, as the *Industry* tacked back and forth in the safe, deep waters beyond the notorious Columbia River bar, known for good reason as a graveyard of ships. Lewis was waiting for the bar pilots to send a boat with a pilot over to guide the big windjammer safely into the river. But no pilot had come, and now the *Industry's* supplies of food and water were exhausted. Lewis couldn't wait any longer.

He gave the order to fall off the wind and sail into the bar.

At the top of the Cape Disappointment Lighthouse, on the Washington side of the river, the lighthouse keeper, Joel Munson, must have watched this with mounting anxiety. Captain Lewis was taking a huge risk, and no one knew that better than Munson. His duties at the lighthouse went beyond tending the light; it also regularly fell to him

to retrieve and arrange for burial of the corpses of unlucky mariners that all too frequently washed up on the beach nearby. The prevailing winds on the Oregon coast come out of the southwest, so when a ship foundered on the bar, the wreckage tended to be blown his way.

Sailing ships were especially vulnerable on the bar. There were unpredictable wind shadows, and many a ship would sail on in only to be suddenly becalmed at the worst possible moment.

And that's exactly what happened to the *Industry* an hour or so later. Although the wind picked back up, the current had shifted her position and on the next attempt to tack, the *Industry* struck a sandbar, which tore off her rudder.

Now truly helpless, the *Industry* wallowed in the bar as the seas got bigger — probably as a result of the tide starting to come in. A lifeboat was launched and promptly capsized. The survivors on the ship climbed into the rigging to escape from the pounding breakers, which soon had the decks cleared of everything, in-

cluding even the cabins. They waited there all day and all night.

Finally, the next day, the seas were calm enough for the survivors to build rafts from the wreckage and float to shore. One raft made it; the other did not. Seven men lived; 17 died.

By the time the last mariner had drowned, it had been a good 48 hours since the *Industry's* rudder was stripped off. Munson, who had been unable to do anything but watch helplessly, now had something he could do: Go to the beach and look for corpses.

But when he got to the beach, Munson found something else: A battered lifeboat — either the one that had capsized after launch, or the one stripped off the *Industry* by a comber.

Munson decided he'd take that lifeboat and use it to actually do something about the situation he found so intolerable.

Munson was a gifted fiddle player — his nickname was "Fiddler Smith." He decided to use that talent, along with his new lifeboat, to get a life-saving station started at "Cape D." And the next time a ship went down, he'd just row right out there and start rescuing people.

He booked a series of fund-raising dances in Astoria, charging \$2.50 a head — equal to about \$40 today. The community turned out in force to support the cause. He also talked the lighthouse service into building a boathouse for the lifeboat he was restoring, and put out a call to the community for volunteers to help him row it.

By the following spring, Munson could say with absolute confidence that if the *Industry* wreck were repeated, every hand would be rescued.

But he didn't have to boast. In May of 1866, another bark — the *W.B. Scranton*, ironically owned and captained by the same fellow who owned the *Industry*, Paul Corno — came to grief on the bar after running ashore. Munson and his volunteers were ready. Several hours later, the entire crew of 13 men was safely on shore.

A few years later, Munson and his team rowed out again to rescue 10 mariners off the rigging of the *Architect*, a bark that simply filled with water and sank to the bottom with its masts protruding above the waves.

By 1877, Munson was getting a

bit too old for this sort of thing, so he handed it off to his volunteers, retired from the lighthouse service and moved to Astoria. There he built a small steamer, the *Magnet*, and went into business operating it until 1881, when he was appointed as lightkeeper at Point Adams, on the Oregon side of the river. He did this until 1898, when bad health forced him to leave the post; he died a short time later.

As for the life station he founded, it was staffed by community volunteers until 1882, when the U.S. government made it an official operation and hired career surfmen. An additional station was built at Point Adams. The U.S. Coast Guard runs the stations today, using 47-foot “motor lifeboats” that are virtually unsinkable to rescue mariners in astonishingly hostile seas.

Over the years, thousands of mariners have been saved from the lonely, watery death that came to those 17 sailors on the *Industry*, almost 150 years ago. And it all started when the Pacific Ocean took away their lifeboat and gave it to Joel Munson.

Nobody wants to drown at sea. Still, if one has to die that way anyway, there’s something special and noble about that death being part of

something that saves the lives of so many others.

(Sources: Marshall, Don. *Oregon Shipwrecks*. Portland: Binford & Mort, 1984; Gaston, Joseph. *The Centennial History of Oregon, 1811-1912*, v. 2. Chicago: S.J. Clark, 1912; DeWire, Elinor. “In Focus: Joel Munson, Rescuer,” *The Focal Point*, v. 5, no. 1, Feb. 2009; www.lighthousefriends.com)

Finn J.D. John, an instructor at Oregon State University, writes about unusual and little-known aspects of Oregon history. He is currently working on a book about former Oregon resident Herbert Hoover during and after World War I, when he saved hundreds of millions from starving to death. To contact him or suggest a topic: finn@herberthoover.us or 541-357-2222.

Cape Disappointment

Ilwaco, Washington



The landmark lighthouse takes a beating from harsh coastal weather.

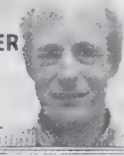


ILWACO — A 16-year Coast Guard veteran, DCI Jason Billings arrived at Cape Disappointment a year ago in July. His work — literally damage control — was cut out for him. Billings is responsible for 35 buildings, most of which are contemporary structures.

However, like so many military bases, there is layer upon layer of history within its confines. Set on an inlet at the base of a steep, forested peninsula, "Station Cape D" was the home to the Chinook tribe, Civil War fortifications, an early life-saving station and the West Coast's oldest operating lighthouse. "I like to walk where our ancestors walked — where history was made," Billings said.

JOHN GOODENBERGER

FOR THE
COAST RIVER
BUSINESS JOURNAL



Seeing the base for the first time, Billings' curiosity was piqued. He asked the other officers, "What's up this hill?" "A bear," they told him. "Don't go up there." When he climbed the hill, he saw Battery Elijah O'Flyng: vines wrapped the concrete structure with their roots, thick moss carpeted whatever was not smothered beneath the underbrush. "I was awestruck," he recalled.

See **PRESERVED** Page A23

"BETSY"

The 15-inch Rodman gun (at left), was mounted outside the lighthouse during the Civil War.

COURTESY OF THE
U.S. COAST GUARD



WELL PRESERVED

Cape Disappointment

Ilwaco, Washington



The landmark lighthouse takes a beating from harsh coastal weather.



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"BETSY"

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COURTESY OF THE
U.S. COAST GUARD

In One Ear



by Elleda Wilson

ewilson@dailyastorian.com (503) 325-3211, ext. 257

FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE



6-3-2016

From **The Daily Astorian**, Tuesday Morning, **June 6, 1899** (<http://tinyurl.com/DAJune1899>):

- While the steamer **Columbia** was lying at the O.R.N. company's dock Sunday a heavy bar of iron dropped into the fire room, striking **Thomas Gilder**, a fireman, on the head, and he owes it to sheer good luck and strong skull that he was not killed outright instead of being knocked unconscious ...

- **George H. Stillwell**, first assistant keeper at **Tillamook Light**, will go out today on the **Columbine** to renew his vigil on that lonely rock, which will last for the next four months, or longer if the man who comes ashore is as long getting back as he has been ...

Mr. Stillwell came ashore the first of April, and should have gone back at the end of the month, but each time the **Columbine** was here the weather was so rough that it was impossible to make a landing on the rock.

- Among other curios, **Captain Richardson** of the **Columbine** has the skull and beak of an unusually large **albatross**, the bird when alive measuring over 12 feet from tip to tip.

- The launch **El Hurd** was fitted up yesterday with drain pipes to the fish tank (so) ... the boat, after being washed down, can be quickly pumped out instead of being emptied by the slow process of bailing, which has prevailed heretofore.

- **James Muckle**, of Muckle Bros., St. Helens, was in Astoria yesterday ... Mr. Muckle is one of the many loggers who does not regret that he voted for Mr. McKinley for president (1897 to 1901). During the preceding administration he could hire all the men he wanted at \$1 (about \$33 now) per day, but now he has to pay from \$40 to \$70 per month, yet the difference in the price of logs is such that he is making more money now than when he had cheap hands ...

- And finally: To those who drink whiskey for pleasure; **Harper Whiskey** adds zest to existence. To those who drink whiskey for health's sake: Harper Whiskey makes life worth living. Sold by Foard & Stokes Co., Astoria, Ore.



GRIM TILLAMOOK ROCK looked like this to Les Orde-
man, Journal photographer, as he approached old light-
house, which may soon be decommissioned if coast guard
recommendation is accepted. Cutter Ivy turned back Tues-

day but decided to deliver supplies next day despite heavy
northwesterly swell flattened somewhat by fresh east
wind. Circle shows breeches buoy being lowered for re-
turning lighthouse engineer and press party.



TASK of running supplies, carrying personnel between Astoria and Tillamook Rock is responsibility of cutter Ivy, whose skipper, Lt. Comdr. R. J. Evans, is veteran ship officer. This is all Ordeman's camera saw of Ivy as

he approached vessel after being dumped in breeches buoy from rock. Such waves smashed against rock, causing difficult landing situation in which Coxswain Leonard Thompson maneuvered surfboat skillfully.

2-17-1956



ALAN RICHARDS gets ready to take off for vacation after 42 days on rock. Lonnie Haynes (right), seaman, and Jim



Jack, another Portland seafarer, assist in "harnessing" fireman. At right he is dropped into dancing boat.



ROBERT R. CHESSMAN, Astoria publisher, takes off via breeches buoy, on press call to promontory. After very few minutes, he and others were forced to leave rock because

seas were kicked up by fresh blow. By then surfboat taxi—furnished by cutter Ivy—was dancing in churning white water and Chessman missed boat in first descent.

2-17-1956

Cape Meares Lighthouse damaged by vandals

Parks staff estimates damage at \$50,000

TILLAMOOK — Oregon State Police and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department are seeking the public's help after significant vandalism to the historic Cape Meares Lighthouse.

Oregon Parks staff estimate damage to be over \$50,000.

A reward of up to \$1,000 is offered by The Friends of Cape Meares Lighthouse and Wildlife Refuge for information leading to an arrest and conviction of the people responsible in this case.

According to OSP Sergeant Todd Hoodenpyl, between the afternoon of Jan. 9 and noon Jan. 10, a vehicle reportedly drove down a blocked maintenance road to the Cape Meares Lighthouse viewing area 10 miles west of Tillamook. Several rounds were fired,

breaking 15 windows of the lighthouse and several pieces of a historic Fresnel lens. Cape Lookout State Park Manager Pete Marvin reported the lighthouse lenses were very old with much historical value and are irreplaceable.

Additional rounds were fired into an active U.S. Coast Guard light and surrounding equipment. While driving off the maintenance road the suspect vehicle caused significant damage to a grassy area.

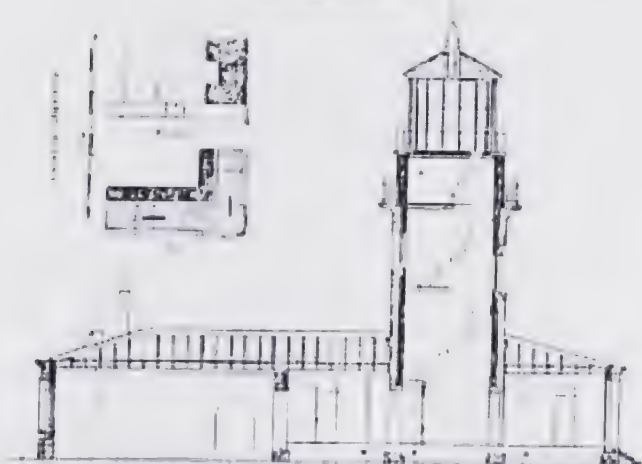
"We're all looking at each other, going, 'Why that place?'" said Hoodenpyl. "Why shoot that place up?" "This has been a part of my life for 20 years," said Alicia Knowlton, president of the Friends of Cape Meares Lighthouse and Wildlife Refuge. "I love that building. To think that somebody has done this, I'm mad and disappointed." The Cape Meares Lighthouse

ON THE NET

For more details log on to
www.oregonstateparks.org/park_181.php



Elevation East Side



Vertical Section, looking North, through Dwelling, Tower and Fog Signal Room

DA-1-12-2010

See LIGHTHOUSE, Page 12



Submitted photo

The Fresnel lens at Cape Meares Lighthouse suffered significant damage in a vandalism attack that occurred between Jan. 9 and 10.

Lighthouse: Reward is set

Continued from Page 1

went into service Jan. 1, 1890. It was named after Capt. John Mearnes, who is believed to be the first person to sail into Tillamook Bay.

The lighthouse lens was manufactured in Paris, and shipped around Cape Horn up to Oregon. Information about the Cape Mearnes State Scenic Viewing area,

which is closed in response to this incident, is available at www.oregonstateparks.org/park_181.php

Anyone with information to help in the OSP investigation is asked to call the OSP Northern Command Center dispatch at (800) 452-7888.

The Associated Press contributed to this story



Submitted photo

Vandals fired several rounds at the Cape Meares Lighthouse, breaking 15 windows during the weekend.

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